

# Methods for Mortifying Sin (Part 5)

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[ 0 : 00 ] We began our study, Pursuing Holiness in an Unholy World, back in September 2021.

! We've covered much ground in what we can describe as striving for holiness. Then we moved into phase two of our study by examining some of the Scriptures designed to assist us in the ongoing battle each of us are engaging in against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And thus far, we've looked at these great truths from God's Word. Abstain from fleshly lusts. Flee sexual immorality.

Make no provision for the flesh. Be encouraged that the old self is already dead. Focus your heart on Christ.

Meditate on the Word of God. Now, number two on our list tonight, flee sexual immorality.

Originally, that was a subcategory, but I felt like given the times in which we live, it should be elevated to the main list of ammunition that the Bible provides us in the war that we find ourselves involved in in the 21st century.

[ 1 : 34 ] Both John MacArthur and John Owen, who lived 500 years apart, include in their list of the ammunition that God provided us in the Scripture to wage this battle with this next truth that we're going to examine tonight.

And that's the truth of watch and pray without ceasing. And that comes right out of 1 Thessalonians 5.17, which says, pray without ceasing.

We have some great truths to examine tonight concerning prayer. More specifically, unceasing prayer. Paul's words in the 1 Thessalonian passage stand as great truth from the Holy Spirit, the author, of course, of the Bible, and provide significant ammunition in our ongoing battle with sin. Years ago, I read this quote from what is now an author whose name I cannot recall. But he said this, a man is never taller than when he is on his knees praying to God.

So how important is prayer? Of course, every true believer knows the answer to that question. It is the vital link between God and man.

[ 3 : 05 ] It is our lifeblood as we live out our days in this sin-cursed world. We've already examined the important role that prayer played during the incarnation of Christ.

We did that last week while we examined that piece of ammunition, meditate on the Word of God.

And I'm reminded on the importance of prayer when Jesus arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal.

We read these words in the Gospel of Luke chapter 22. He went out, He there is Christ. He went out and went, as was His habit, to the Mount of Olives.

And the disciples also followed Him. Now when He arrived at the place, He said to them, Pray that you do not come into temptation.

And of course, we all know the story. But let's read a little bit more to enlighten us. The Lord withdrew from them about a stone's throw.

[ 4 : 25 ] And He knelt down and began to pray, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done.

Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He was praying very fervently. And His sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground. When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow. And said to them, Why are you sleeping?

Get up and pray that you do not come into temptation. True followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are praying people. I'm sure that there are many reasons for this, but let me see if I can name a couple. First, we live out our lives depending on God. I sometimes wonder in the 21st century if we understand how critical that dependence is.

[ 5 : 38 ] One of the Old Testament prophets said, words to this effect, He holds our very breath in His hands. We can't take another breath unless God wills it and it is by the grace of Almighty God.

And second, we recognize our own insufficiency, how insufficient we are, and pray that the God of heaven will meet our daily needs. When the Apostle Paul tells us to pray without ceasing, He is giving to us a divine mandate to every believer in every age regardless of circumstances.

Circumstances has no bearing on it other than we may end up waking up at 2 or 3 in the morning and feeling like we need to pray more fervently. Now when Paul says we should pray without ceasing, he's using a common word for prayer in the New Testament.

I'm not about to try and pronounce the Greek word used there, but we should note that it encompasses every type of praying that the followers of Christ are supposed to engage in.

This would most definitely encompass these forms of prayer. Prayers of submission, prayers of confession, prayers of petition, prayers of intercession, prayers of praise, and prayers of thanksgiving.

[ 7 : 22 ] Questions do arise though when we read this command that we are to pray without ceasing.

That would seem not just a tall order, but an impossible one to fulfill. There are times when we're asleep. There are times when we are in conversation with other people.

There are times when we are at play. Our prayers are going to be constant, but they cannot possibly embrace perpetual conversation with the highest power of the universe.

The best description I have ever read on defining ceaseless praying was that we are to adopt an attitude of prayer.

In other words, we should have with us at all times a God consciousness. When we wake up at three in the morning, do your thoughts turn to the Lord?

[ 8 : 36 ] When you're driving down the road, are you thinking about the Lord? We should be aware of God at all times. We are or should be aware that God's Spirit is with us.

He is always available to us. There is never a time when God is not present in the life of a believer. There may have been a few times when I wish He wouldn't, but He was there.

He was still there. In the model prayer found in the 11th chapter of Luke, we hear these words from the Lord. Do not lead us into temptation.

All familiar with that. If we are to pursue holiness, this is a brief but important petition that we should make.

But we at the same time come face to face with a problem that for some is insurmountable. Here's the problem.

[ 9 : 45 ] Asking God not to tempt us. Lord, don't lead us into temptation. Now we know from a very clear reading of the book of James that God tempting anyone is an impossibility.

And I base that on James 1.13. No one is to say when he is tempted, I'm being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself does not tempt anyone. So we've got to work through that and arrive at a resolution.

In Luke, we are to petition God to not lead us into temptation. In James, we read that God never tempts anyone.

Do we have a conflict between those two passages? And the short answer to that is of course not. So how do we resolve this?

[ 10 : 51 ] It's totally resolved in God's mind. So if it never gets resolved in ours, it's resolved where it counts. But I do think we can find resolution this way.

God does not tempt us. But He does allow tests and trials to come into our life.

And I think it is appropriate to pray that those tests and those trials which are common to all of us do not turn into temptations that could prove overpowering, even potentially lead us into sin.

This is a very appropriate prayer as we strive for holiness. So we ask the Lord not to tempt us, but to be with us during trials of life and tests of life.

There are two passages in the New Testament. They use the same words. So I only read it one time. It's exactly the same. It came from the same Holy Spirit.

[ 12 : 04 ] Keep watching and praying so that you do not come into temptation. The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

And that's Matthew 26.41 and Mark 14.38. There's also a very helpful passage in the Psalms. When you're in doubt or panic sets in, turn to the Psalms.

Psalm 5.3. In the morning, Lord, you will hear my voice. In the morning, I will present my prayer to you and be on the watch.

That is a Psalm written by David. I also like the wording of that Psalm in the King James Version. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning. O Lord, in the morning, I will direct my prayer into you and will look up.

We pray and we look up. So why is watching and praying so important? By doing so, we can better identify the circumstances that lead us into sin.

[ 13 : 22 ] The circumstances that try to thwart our growth in holiness. That will then enable us to offer specific prayers to face head-on those temptations so they don't become sins.

One writer has said we should all pray for a holy hatred of sin. And I'm not sure we've ever really come to grips with how devastating sin is.

I know Dr. Sproul shortly before his death said, any sin against God is cosmic treason. That's pretty strong. That's pretty strong.

Have you ever prayed that God would reveal to you the actual state of your sinful heart? Boy, that's a tough prayer.

Peel again to King David. And this time in the great 19th Psalm. That's the Psalm that starts out, the heavens declare the glory of God.

[ 14 : 30 ] But then in the middle of that Psalm or toward the end, Psalm 19 starting in verse 12. Who can discern his errors?

Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep your servant back from presumptuous sins.

Let them not rule over me. Then I will be innocent. And I will be blameless of great wrongdoing. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

This portion of Psalm 19 is often referred to as a prayer asking God for sanctification. That's a big word for being recreated in the image of Christ or being more holy.

[ 15 : 36 ] David asks for amazing things in these words. He wants to know the errors of his heart so he can either avoid certain sins or confess them as the case may be.

David wants to be acquitted of hidden faults. And here David asks for acquittal for the hidden faults of his life. We could call them hidden sins.

There are two types of hidden sins. There are those that we know about and we know them all too well.

There are also those that we're not aware of or we've forgotten that we committed them. David wants to be acquitted of all of these.

So how is that possible? Well, it is made possible through the application of the great truth, one of the greatest truths contained in John's first epistle.

[ 16 : 40 ] I'm sure you all have this verse memorized by now. 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.

I'm always amazed as to how the Holy Spirit can pack in great truths in really an economy of words. Just a few words. This portion of Scripture is talking about walking in the light. It's walking in the light and of course we know the light is Christ.

Walking as Jesus walked. Confession was absolutely crucial to entering into the light and we call that justification.

Confession is also crucial to walking in the light once we are justified. Walking in the light is sanctification.

[ 17 : 51 ] I've said before in our last time around a few years ago that we're on sanctification highway. We're on the sanctification road growing in the image of Christ.

In the process of being made progressively holy, these two things are essential. I find it utterly amazing that the church down through the ears but especially in the latter half of the 20th century argued and disagreed over those two great truths.

It's amazing what churches argue about. Just amazing. Some taught that essentials like repentance and confession were mere add-ons.

They're human works. They have nothing to do with justification or sanctification. That is an egregious error. I like this quote from Dr.

MacArthur. He says, out of the soil of errant soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, comes the antinomian indifference toward a Christian life of repentance and confession for the sake of

holiness.

[ 19 : 15 ] As a reminder, antinomian is that belief that we're not under any law of God and therefore we can pretty much do anything we want without fear of judgment or punishment.

The antinomian says that we're not under any moral law. Anti-against, nomos, the law, we're not under any moral law and they throw in there the Ten Commandments, the moral law of God. That's a dangerous heresy. We're under the moral law of God. The Ten Commandments apply to every culture and every age for all time.

If anyone is bothered by that thought, consider this. Nine of the Ten Commandments are restated in the New Testament specific to Christians.

You still can't murder. You still can't steal. You can't lie. You still have to honor your father and your mother and so on. I could argue that the one law not restated specifically as it appears in the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, is keeping of the Jewish Sabbath.

[ 20 : 33 ] The Jewish Sabbath was from 6 p.m. on Friday to 6 p.m. on Saturday. Well, quite frankly, we don't do that. Although, once a month we do play dominoes in here during part of that time frame.

And I think it's scheduled for this Friday when it's going to be 8 degrees. we're not under that. One way to look at it is we worship on Sunday morning in memory of the resurrection of our Lord. Another way to look at it, and I like this, we worship all the time. We worship every day of the week whenever possible. We do so through that God consciousness or awareness that the Almighty is always there.

He's always there. So, let's turn to a prayer of confession and repentance as our model. And it's a great model.

It is found in David's Psalm 51. This was prayed after his illicit relationship with Bathsheba.

[ 21 : 50 ] You remember the story? And remember, that story was filled with sin in the Old Testament when you read it. The very first one was in the spring when kings go out to a battle for the Lord.

David was in Jerusalem. Yeah, he was on a rooftop looking down at a woman taking a bath. It culminated in the murder of her husband.

David murdered her husband. Had him murdered. Finally, he comes to his senses in Psalm 51. Listen to these words. Be gracious to me, God, according to your faithfulness, according to the greatness of your compassion, wipe out my wrongdoings.

wash me thoroughly from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my wrongdoings and my sin is constantly before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified when you speak, and blameless when you judge.

[ 23 : 18 ] Behold, I was brought forth in guilt, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, you desire truth in the innermost being, and in secret you will make wisdom known to me.

Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean. Cleanse me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness.

Let the bones you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and wipe out all my guilty deeds. Create in me a clean heart, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit.

Then I will teach wrongdoers your ways, and sinners will be converted to you. Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, God, the God of my salvation.

[ 24 : 32 ] Then my tongue will joyfully sing of your righteousness. Lord, open my lips so that my mouth may declare your praise, for you do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it.

You do not take pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. God, you will not despise.

that's an amazing time of confession and repentance. I'm reminded, I read often in the Old Testament of that great sin, and I'm reminded when Nathan the prophet went to David and told him the story, you know, there's a rich man in your kingdom, and you remember the story, took a little ewe lamb from among a servant, he treated that ewe lamb like his own child, he butchered it because a visitor came, David burned and he said, that man needs to die.

Before he does die, we're going to make him repay fourfold. And then Nathan the prophet looked at him and said, you're the man. And for the first time, David realized that was not a secret sin hidden from view.

God saw it all. Even his house servants were talking about it. And he got down on his face. And then Nathan got him up and he said, God has not taken away your salvation.

[ 26 : 11 ] You're still saved. But there's another piece to the passage because Nathan then says, but, B-U-T, but, and this is what God is going to do to you, David.

David. And actually, if you read it closely, it was fourfold. David said, that guy will pay four times. David paid fourfold. I mean, he had a daughter raped by a son.

Another son avenged that by killing his son. He had all kinds of stuff go on. And lost his first child, conceived with Bathsheba.

The last point I want to make from the 19th Psalm this evening is David's plea with God to keep him from presumptuous sin.

Well, since we too need to be kept from presumptuous sin, it might be good to know what those are. But, Charles Spurgeon provides a great answer. A presumptuous sin is one that is committed willfully against manifest light and knowledge.

[ 27 : 31 ] That's a presumptuous sin. A sin that is committed with the full knowledge. Well, I know this is sin, but I'm going to do it anyway. And I feel certain I'm the only person there that's ever done that.

But, that's a presumptuous sin. I know the Scriptures say don't do this, and I'm going to do it. It is sinning willfully with the certain knowledge that the sin in question is a clear violation of Scripture. When we sin, we take it to the Lord in 1 John 1 9. We do that with the knowledge that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Advocate there is the word for defense attorney. And we go to our advocate. Let me offer one more passage from the Word of God that brings us great comfort.

Found in the book of Hebrews chapter 4 beginning in verse 14. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let's hold firmly to our confession.

[ 29 : 02 ] For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin.

Listen to this. Therefore, because of all that, therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need.

We, as followers of Christ, may approach the throne of grace with confidence, boldly, or in the Greek language, with bold resolve.

I'll make one more comment and then close. This is further proof that the Bible was written by God and not invented by man. Name any religion created by man that allows its adherents to approach their deity.

I had vigorous conversations with a very good friend of mine. You'll probably be able to guess his religion, Abdul Hakim Jana. Great, great friend though.

[ 30 : 30 ] We've traveled throughout the Middle East. Christ. And he had a real problem when I refer to God as our father or my father. It's too personal. The idea that you think you guys can approach God.

And then I explained to him, well, through Christ we can approach God. And, you know, it was interesting conversations. no human religion allows that.

And no human can make up a story that, oh yeah, you can go talk to God at any time, just go into His presence boldly as His child when you're His child.

The cults don't allow it. Only in true Christianity can we come boldly and with confidence into the presence of God.

And then the Scriptures tell us what we're doing there. Seeking mercy and grace in our time of need. Which is pretty much all the time.

[ 31 : 40 ] It's pretty much all the time. When is our time of need? Always. As we say today, 24-7.

Thank you.