

Methods for Mortifying Sin (Part 4)

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Date: 28 February 2022

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[0 : 00] For several weeks now, we've been examining the scriptural ways to mortify or kill the sin that remains in our lives.

The following quote is actually from Dr. John Piper. Maybe the first time I've ever quoted him. I'm not sure. But this is from Dr. Piper.

It is both relief and heartache to know that all true believers have sin remaining in them in this life. The great apostle said, not that I've already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own.

Of course, that's Philippians 3.2. In another place, he said, I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Romans 7.23. Jesus to pray daily, forgive us our trespasses. Matthew 6.12.

[1 : 23] Killing sin is not an option. It's mortal combat. Again, John Piper, sin dies or we die.

Refuse to settle in with sin. When I was in the Marine Corps, our sergeant called us together one morning. Morning started for us at 3.30 a.m.

Usually with a trash can come sailing down the squad bay. He was obviously upset and we all thought, well, we've done something wrong again.

But then he had a circle around him and he started talking to us almost like a father figure. That was very unusual.

This was at the height of the Vietnam War during the summer of 1968. Ted had just finished and Rocky was just about to go over there. He didn't have much longer to wait.

[2 : 30] It had been reported that a Marine unit had gone out on patrol and were walking on a levee surrounded by rice paddies. There was some high grass next to the banks of the levee and North Vietnamese soldiers popped up and started firing their AK-47s.

The leader of the patrol froze and then yelled for everyone to lay down on the levee.

And our sergeant went on to tell us, one by one, each Marine on that patrol was killed. And then he said something to us I have never forgotten.

He said when you get into a situation like that, do something even if you're wrong. But you've got to be moving.

Even if you're wrong, do something because if you lay down, you're going to die. Now I'm not suggesting that in the mortification process, when it comes to dealing with sin, we do something even if it's wrong.

[3 : 50] That's not at all what I'm suggesting. But I am saying we should do the things that are consistent with the revealed Word of God and not just lay down and give up.

Therein lies our ammunition for the battle that rages all around us and the battle that rages in us. Here is a list of the weapons we have been supplied thus far in our study.

Abstain from fleshly lusts. Make no provision for the flesh. And be encouraged that the old self within you is already dead.

These are good weapons with which to fight the good fight. There are more, and we're going to examine a couple of them tonight.

The next one we're going to look at is focus your heart on Christ. Fix your thoughts during the day on Christ.

[5 : 09] When you go to bed at night, fix your thoughts on Christ. When you wake up at three in the morning and it seemed like the world's caving in on you, fix your hearts on Christ.

I've been getting up at three to see if an atomic bomb has been dropped somewhere lately. 1 John 3, verses 2 and 3.

Beloved, we are God's children now. And what we will be is not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.

And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. I've said to you before, the attractiveness of heaven is not found in golden streets and pearly gates.

It is attractive because it is a place of no sin. Almost impossible to imagine. No sin.

[6 : 22] That's a staggering thought. I've never been in a place of no sin. And may I say, even when I'm alone, sin's still there.

I'd like to experience that. Place of no sin. I don't necessarily want to spare it tonight in God's timing. The Apostle Paul eloquently put it this way through inspired Scripture. Philippians 1. I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now, as always, Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or death.

And then very famous, we've read before, for to me to live in Christ is Christ and to die is gain. If I'm to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.

Yet which shall I choose? I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

[7 : 53] But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again.

Paul understood the immense importance of his task on this earth. He was writing the blueprint for Christian living in at least 13 books of the New Testament.

He also knew that living in the presence of the Lord Jesus was going to be infinitely superior to life on this planet. And it will be superior because the sinless Son of God will be there.

And we will be like Him. As we talk about focusing on Jesus as a weapon used in the killing of sin, I came across Psalm 135.

The Psalms are most interesting and obviously very beneficial to our worship and study. The Psalms were actually written over a period of a thousand years.

[9 : 25] You may not have known that. And there are a number of authors. And I noted them. David wrote 75 Psalms. Asaph wrote 12 Psalms.

Sons of Korah, 11 Psalms. Heman, did you know there was a guy, Heman, in the Bible? Solomon, one Psalm. Solomon, two Psalms. Moses, one Psalm.

That's why we can say it took a thousand years. And Ethan, the Ezraite, one Psalm. But guess what? That leaves 48 Psalms whose authorship is anonymous.

We don't know who wrote them. There's some conjecture, but we don't know. And the author of Psalm 135 is anonymous. But I want you to listen to just a small portion of that Psalm.

Psalm 135. I'm going to start in verse 15. Very instructive. The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

[10 : 37] Those are the idols of the nations. They have mouths. These idols. They have mouths, but they do not speak.

They have eyes, but they do not see. They have ears, but do not hear. Nor is there any breath in their mouths.

And listen to this, guys. Those who make them become like them.

Wow. So do all who trust in them. Those who make them and those who trust in them become like them.

What a frightening thought. There's a great truth contained here. You are what you worship. That's a great truth.

[11 : 42] This psalm here is talking about lifeless idols that fallen sinful men worship.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine? I went to a funeral at the St. John's downtown. And I was amazed that when our Catholic friends would approach the front, they bowed to the cross with Jesus on the cross.

And our state representative was the biggest duck in the puddle. I got friends with him. And I told him later, I said, you know, he's not on the cross anymore. He's seated at the right hand of the Father.

He said, I've always wondered about that. These are lifeless gods that are being worshipped.

You know, Romans talked about stone and metal and different... Now let's reverse this. How much more will we become like Christ when we worship Him appropriately?

[12:56] So let's reverse it. Not a lifeless idol, but the God of the universe. And into that mix that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we're taught by Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit whose very goal is to make us Christ-like through sanctification.

We discover through sanctification that our worship is conforming us to the image of Christ. Again, listen to the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3.

And we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. There's another arrow that we can put in our quiver tonight.

And that is that we should meditate on the Word of God. And that assumes you're in the Word of God and reading the Word of God and then meditate on it.

[14:14] Take it in. Reflect on it. Here's a quote from the longest chapter in the Bible. Psalm 119, verse 11.

I have stored up Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You. Storing up God's Word that I might not sin against You.

When the Lord spoke to Joshua, that by the way in the New Testament is translated Jesus, but it wasn't Christ, it was Joshua back yonder.

The Lord said this, Joshua 1.8, The book of the law shall not depart from your mouth. This was a command to Joshua.

It shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

[15:22] For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success. Well, the Bible is a storehouse.

The Bible provides the ammunition that we must have to battle sin contained in the Word of God.

And we've been going over a lot of that ammo. God makes this abundantly clear in many passages of Scripture. For instance, He tells us in Psalm 2, we must meditate on God's Word day and night.

He tells us in Psalm 119, 105, that God's Word is to be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

We must allow God's truth to penetrate our hearts and to fill our minds. At the appropriate time, God will bring this arsenal of truth to the forefront and battle the sin that is trying to capture us and destroy us.

[16:38] And let's be honest, a lot of people in various churches around our land and around the world, they get about 30 minutes a week if they attend in a Sunday school class.

That's not going to cut it. All of us should return frequently to John 17. You're going to be there Sunday. First five verses.

This is known as the high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. I've always found this fact interesting.

Obviously, Jesus was a man of most intense prayer. But I also find it quite interesting that the Lord's prayers are not extensively covered in holy writ.

We don't often sit down and read a complete prayer of Jesus. The Bible has much to say about Jesus preparing to pray.

[17:51] And much to say about where Jesus goes to pray. But seldom does it give the actual prayer. For instance, He went into the wilderness to pray.

Oh, that's in a bunch of verses of Scripture. He left His followers behind. He goes to the wilderness. He went to the wilderness to pray before He had followers.

He went to desolate places to pray. He withdrew from His followers to pray.

He went off alone. He went to lonely places to pray. He went to deserted places to pray.

He went to the desert to pray. but this has to be His all-time favorite because it's everywhere. He left to go pray on the mountaintop.

[18:58] He went up on a mountaintop or a high hill and there He met with His Father and prayed. Given the fact that He went to these types of places to pray, it is no wonder that we don't have very many of His actual prayers.

He was alone. No one was with Him. But there is a major exception and it's huge.

And that is the high priestly prayer between the Father and Christ and Christ that was carried on in the presence of the Lord's disciples, His followers.

prayers. It is often called the inter-trinitarian prayer. It was a prayer between the Trinity, the Father, the Son, energized by the Spirit, so the Trinity was present, by its inclusion in the Bible.

The fact that these words were written down, inspired by the Spirit of God, we get to be the fly on the wall and listen in on how the Lord prayed to His Father.

[20 : 24] I love chapter 17. If I'm on a deserted island, I can only have one chapter, I'm going to take that. And it's inexhaustible. You can read it a thousand times and you'll get something new the next time you read it.

It is there that we hear Jesus ask the Father this, sanctify them, His followers, sanctify them in the truth.

Your word is truth. The great truths found in the word of God are the very truths that He uses to sanctify us.

Let me put it in a little different word. This is how God is steadily making us holy. sanctification is being recreated in the image of Christ who is holy.

He is conforming us to the image of Christ and we know without holiness no one will see the Lord. So what is our role in all this?

[21 : 39] Good question. What is our role? we are commanded to fill our minds with God's truth.

We are commanded to fill our hearts with God's truth. We are to reflect on the word of God every day.

We are to let the word of God to direct our daily moment-by-moment walk with the Lord.

Interesting when you live in a culture that almost totally turned its back on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

we are to let the word of God to direct us every day, every moment. Again, I appeal to the Apostle Paul, this time in the letter to the Philippian church and the Colossian church.

Philippians 4.8, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is in any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

[23 : 05] That's what we're to think about. Then Colossians 3.16, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. A command.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. Paul tells us in Ephesians, great book, a miniature book of Romans, but in Ephesians chapter 6, he tells us there that the sword of the spirit is the word of God.

And of course, a sword is an offensive weapon. We use it to hack to pieces the sins in our life.

That's what we're supposed to do with it. Just as Samuel, the priest, did to Agag, the king of the Amalekites at Gilgal.

Who names their son Agag? You probably remember that story back in 1 Samuel 15. God commanded that they were to defeat the evil nation of the Amalekites.

[24 : 25] These guys were horrible. They hated God. They hated God's people. And God issued a very startling command, really.

He said to Saul, the king, the unqualified king, who used to make his living counting donkeys that were missing from herds.

That's a true story. God told Saul, when you go after the Amalekites, kill everyone in that land. Kill them all, including children, including babies, and including all of their herds, their animals.

I read that to a Sunday school class years ago and one lady said, that can't be. That's an error.

That's not in there. I do think that those children babies went to glory though.

I believe that. well, Saul carried it out. Sort of.

[25 : 40] He spared some of the better livestock. That's the first thing that got his attention. Man, these are good looking cattle, you know. I'm not just going to waste them. He spared the cattle, some of them, and he spared the life of one of the most evil kings on earth, Agag.

Why was Agag spared? There's some conjecture on that. I think it had a lot to do with Saul. I think Saul wanted to put Agag on display and show the people what he, Saul, had accomplished.

Well, that's Saul's pride run amok. Saul didn't accomplish anything except evil. So, the priest Samuel shows up.

He looks over there and there's Agag. And he's the one that had told Saul, God says, kill them all, including the king. So, Samuel shows up and he says, I need to borrow a sword. I need to borrow a sword. And he carried out the execution of Agag by hacking him to pieces. Not a real pretty sight.

[27 : 10] And Saul was deposed by God and none of his descendants ever sat on the throne.

The throne was turned over to David. David. Here's a great description of this event. It's offered by Dr.

MacArthur in his sermon, which I've read many times, called Hacking Agag to Pieces. Great message.

Here's John's what he tells us. God's attitude towards sinners and his holiness and wrath against sin.

But I want to use it just as an analogy if I might. It is an excellent illustration analogically of the sin that remains in the believer's life.

[28 : 20] When you were saved and when I was saved, there was at that moment a crushing defeat of sin. A crushing defeat.

These are John's words. From one end to the other, east to west, north to south, our sin was crushed. But we still have remaining sins.

There are some Amalekites running around loose in everybody's life. And we all have our agags. And the problem in our Christian lives is not that sin has not been defeated with a crushing defeat. It has, but there is still remaining sin. There are some loose iniquitous, I went to look that up, we'll have to have Micah define that, Amalekites in all of us.

And though there was a great and glorious and triumphant defeat at the time of our salvation, there is the necessity that the remaining sins be hacked to pieces.

[29 : 41] If not, they will revive. they will plunder our hearts, they will sap our spiritual strength. We cannot be merciful with agags in our life.

We cannot be merciful with the remaining sins in our life, or they will turn and create an insurrection and a rebellion to attempt to destroy us.

sin in fact, it may well be that like the Amalekites, the remaining sin in us often becomes more fierce, more formidable than even before because we don't expect it.

Certainly, the children of Israel had felt that the Amalekites were a defeated foe. their king had been hacked to pieces and here they came.

Scripture calls on us to deal with our sin like Samuel dealt with agag and to kill it. That's what we've been talking about.

[30 : 56] There is remaining sin residing in our unredeemed humanness, our flesh, and it has to be killed. It has to be followed up, found, and destroyed and until we do that, we're never going to enjoy what Paul experienced in his bold confidence about a holy and godly, sincere conscience.

Let's close with a word of prayer, fellas. Thank you Father for the day. Your grace and mercy.

Thank you Lord that we have this settled hope because we are certain, we know, and are known by our Savior and Lord.

And Lord, we look around this world and we wonder, is today to the day? Perhaps we won't wake up in our beds.

Perhaps we'll wake up face to face with their Lord. But that's all in your timing, Father. Bless us Lord and use us to thy glory.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.