

Methods for Mortifying Sin (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] Amen. We've been talking about the necessity of the true believer mortifying the sin in his life.

! And I have often quoted Dr. John Owen, the English Puritan, who was the world authority on this topic. We can gain much from studying, but we can gain much from studying, but we can gain much from studying his book, *The Mortification of Sin*, or in my case, studying the abridged version of that book.

And I want to begin this evening with a partial quote from Dr. Owen, which we read last time. I won't read the whole thing, but... Do you mortify? Do you make it your daily work?

Be always at it whilst you live. Cease not a day from this work. Will it be killing sin or it will be killing you? And we ended our lesson last week with this question.

How do we mortify sin? You can also call that, how do you mortify the flesh? But we'll mostly use, how do you mortify sin?

[1 : 18] And as I promised last time, that's where we're going to pick it up this evening. And first, let me say that any progress that an individual makes in the mortification of sin is predicated upon the fact that that individual is a new creature in Christ.

In other words, they've been born again, or the literal language of the New Testament, they've been born from above. They have experienced a new birth that originates with God and flows to the individual.

The classic passage of Scripture that deals with that vitally important subject is of course found in the third chapter of the Gospel of John, first eight verses.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus at night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You've come from God as a teacher.

No one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him. Well, the first thing Jesus did, He totally ignored that. He didn't even respond to it.

[2 : 37] But Jesus responded and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And that applied to everybody in his hearing and everybody in my hearing.

Nicodemus said to Him, How can a person be born when he is old? He cannot enter into his mother's womb a second time and be born, can he? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which has been born of the flesh is flesh. That which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it.

But you do not know where it is coming from and where it is going. So is everyone that has been born of the Spirit. Well, there we have the definitive statement on what it means to be saved or born again.

And that passage should sound very familiar to most of you, since it was at the very heart of our three-year study, *Salvation God's Way*.

[3 : 56] In that regard, our study on pursuing holiness in an unholy world, where we're at now, is intended to be an extension of our study on salvation that we did for nearly three years.

You cannot even begin to pursue holiness unless you've been saved. In the John passage, the Lord is having to explain this fact to one of the most brilliant and lost teachers of all of Israel.

Now, what happens when we are born again or born from above? Well, much to say at the least.

And this is somewhat of a review from the past. When you are born again, you are adopted into the family of God, whereby the Father treats not just as if we are sons, but as if we are His Son, the

Lord Jesus Christ.

That's amazing. You dwell on that tonight. Adoption. We receive justification. Now, what is that?

[5 : 24] Justification is a legal declaration whereby the judge of the universe declares that the person has been restored to a state of righteousness through belief and trust in the work of Christ on the cross rather than on the basis of one's own accomplishments.

And aren't we glad? When God justifies a sinner, that sinner receives full justification.

You are not more justified at the end of your Christian life than you were one second after the beginning of your Christian life when you received justification.

In other words, justification doesn't grow and you become more justified down the road. It doesn't happen that way. Once justified, God immediately initiates the process known as sanctification whereby we progressively grow in Christlikeness until the end of our lives on earth.

There can be many bumps on the road of sanctification. We may fall down. We may skin our knees. God will pick us up and might even give us a little swat on our padded diaper and then tells us, get on with it.

[7 : 04] That way. And then the final step in the process of salvation, and all this is salvation, is glorification.

And that involves the completion of sanctification and the removal of all spiritual defects. When we get to heaven, whether it be through death or the rapture, we will be like Jesus and that's glorified because we shall see Him as He is.

And the definitive verse on this truth is found in 1 John 3. Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be.

We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is. And I look around this world and I say, hasten the day.

Let it come. If we are going to mortify sin in our life, we must be saved and cultivate new habits of godliness.

[8 : 26] Now I've just used a really important word there and I haven't used it very much for 15 lessons. I'll just use this word godliness. We're going to be referring to godliness often as we move forward and ultimately complete this whole block of instruction for the rest of the time we're together until we shut down in May, which is our normal shutdown date, middle of May, for the summer.

And there are actually two sides to godliness. In that regard, it's like a two-sided coin. One side of that coin reads, new habits of godliness.

Flip it over. On the other side of the coin, we read the words, the elimination of old sinful habits. That's the two-sided coin we're talking about.

And may I say to you, this is where the battle is joined. This is the battle that we're all in. All of us. Every believer. I don't care who. When Billy Graham was alive, he was in that battle. John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, James Montgomery Boyce, they all were in that battle.

[9 : 55] The development of new habits and the elimination of old habits is the basis of constant warfare that takes place within the believer.

Every believer lives in unredeemed flesh and fights this battle. And we fight it at different levels, at different speeds, and with different results because they are at different speeds.

We want victory over sin, but the truth is, there can and will be setbacks until that day when we are fully glorified.

Fully glorified. When we see Jesus as He is. But we can, in this life, have a victory of sorts.

There is a degree of victory now if we remain committed to the task of killing sin in our life.

[11 : 00] And that's what we're commanded to do. That can occur, but only when we see such sin as our sworn enemy and something to be slayed.

something to be killed. Now, as I've already said, but it bears repeating, mortification or killing sin in our life is the work reserved for true followers of Christ only.

The call of an unbeliever is different. The call of an unbeliever is narrowly focused.

And that focus is repent, turn from your sins, and trust in the finished work of Christ. And that, of course, is Calvary.

What happened on Calvary? Unbelievers must flee to the only person in the universe that can help them, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

[12 : 12] Until they do so, they remain enslaved to sin with no ammunition to kill sin in their life. It's hard enough when you have the ammunition, but they don't have any ammunition.

So at salvation, what ammunition do they receive, and what ammunition did we receive with which to battle indwelling sin?

Well, the ammunition is actually the very best available to them in the entire universe. To every believer, new and old, the very best ammunition.

They receive the indwelling Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, very God of very God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son.

That's the ammunition. In fact, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the one true God. someone told me one time, they say, well, you can't understand that.

[13:26] I say, you weren't meant to. But God understands it. So why is this important? Because the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, and we're going to see this over the next few weeks, is the very agent of mortification.

He's the agent of mortification. To mortify sin, we must embrace Christ and receive the Holy Spirit. When you are saved, you receive the Holy Spirit. And He makes a lot of promises. Never leave you, never will forsake you. If we do not have Christ, we cannot have the Holy Spirit.

Without Christ and the Spirit, a person's not even in the battle. The following is a quote from John MacArthur who is essentially quoting John Owen.

Scripture offers several practical means whereby believers can mortify their sin. Our growth in grace depends on our obedience to these duties.

[14:46] not one of them is a fleshly or mechanical formula. They are not religious activities or rituals.

John Owen, now he lived in the 1500s, observed that most of the Roman Catholic religious system consisted of mistaken ways and means of mortification.

This is, I'm quoting John Owen's now. Their vows, orders, fastings, penances are all built on this ground. They are all for the mortifying of sin.

They are preaching sermons and books of devotion. They look all this way. But sin cannot be annihilated through legalism, monasticism, pietism, asceticism, Phariseism, celibacy, self-flagellation, confessional booths, rosary beads, Hail Marys, or other external means.

Not going to annihilate sin that way. The instrument of mortification is the Holy Spirit of God. And His power is the energy that works in us to carry out the process.

[16:10] So we are still left with our original question. How do we mortify the sin in our life? And we can only do so by following and obeying the commands of Scripture.

That's it. That's it. We must follow and obey the commands of Scripture. That presupposes we must know what the commands are, doesn't it?

We must be about that work every day and if something crops up throughout the day. Now what does the Bible say about this?

Much more than we can cover tonight. Much more than we can cover in several nights. things. But we need a place to start. So I'm going to start the same place Dr. MacArthur started when he preached on this topic many decades ago.

And that's with the Apostle Peter. Going to start with Peter. And Peter wrote this by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

[17:30] This is God's words. And just what did Peter tell us to do to mortify the sins in our life? He said this, Abstain from fleshly lusts.

That's Peter quoting the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 2.11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers, and that's what we are on this earth, right?

we're aliens and strangers. Some more strange than others, but that's what we all are. I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

You don't have to be a Greek scholar or any other type of scholar to understand Peter's meaning here. remember, this is what the Holy Spirit demands that we do.

We are to stay away from anything and everything that would cause us to lust. Peter is telling this to his generation.

[18:52] He wrote this 2,000 years ago. people. It's written to his generation and all subsequent generations to stop lusting.

I wonder what Peter would say about the 21st century and how difficult that can be. this is totally consistent with the words of Paul because the author is the same, the Holy Spirit.

There's no inconsistencies. But the words of Paul in his letter to the Corinthian church, specifically 1 Corinthians, each of the letters has the same author, the Spirit of God.

And Paul said this, 1 Corinthians 6.18, the first part of that verse. He says, flee sexual immorality. You know, guys, it's not rocket science.

Flee sexual immorality. What is Paul's solution for sexual immorality? Run.

[20 : 04] That's what he's saying. Flee. Run away from it. And remember, neither Peter nor Paul were fleeing Playboy magazine or the internet, were they?

Those things didn't exist. In the Roman Empire, there was evidence of sexual immorality. Even the archaeologists dig that up with their spades in our day.

Had collections of erotic pottery. And rampant male and female prostitution. Even the temples of the Roman Empire had male and female prostitutes.

But in every generation, we are to run or to flee from sexual immorality. Now, why is that so important? I mean, we know it is, but why?

Let's answer the why. And that was 1 Corinthians 6.18. Let's skip down to 18b. That was 1 Corinthians 6.18a. First part.

[21 : 08] The second part. Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body.

But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Wow. That takes it to a whole different level.

That's a whole different level. The Holy Spirit says, if you're sexually immoral, you're sinning against your own body. Peter compares fleshly lusts with a war that is going on inside our body.

And it is a war that is launching attacks on our very soul. The only solution that the apostle Peter has is to stop doing it.

That's why he uses this word abstain. Why is abstinence so important in our day? Well, I can tell you in my own words, in my own experience, words, we don't have a magical delete button.

[22 : 25] button. We don't have a delete button. I've told you many times over the years, and there are some fellows that don't know me that well, but I spent my life in law enforcement.

And in 1974, I was a detective working for the district attorney in Fort Worth. He called me into his office, a bunch of lawyers sitting there.

That's never fun. Prosecutors, they were on the good side. And I was assigned a leading role on the pornography vice squad.

I was to take a leading role. There were others of us. I was curious, I asked them privately later, why me? They said, you're single. We don't have a wife to have to fight.

And I was single, had no girlfriend, didn't have a boyfriend either, had no girlfriend, and I was unsaved.

[23 : 32] I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Literally. Because I'm out working pornography. And after day three, I realized I'm in hell.

I was in hell. But I did that assignment off and on for almost five years. And you know, I did a quick figuring today.

That was 48 years ago. 48 years ago. Some of you in here are barely half that age. Those images can be repressed, but in this life, they cannot be deleted.

it. And I'll tell you, this is not in your notes, I'll add this in. One of the first things I do when I check into a hotel, if I'm alone, it's not an issue if Diane's there, but I just go ahead and hit that delete button.

You can rent those movies. You can hit some button and they disappear for 24 hours. I just do that. That's my desire.

[24 : 51] But I've seen titles of certain movies and hotels, and some of these are interesting. Marriott, owned by Borman guys, Hilton.

I mean, these are high class. And some of the movies, when they first came out, and were shown in the Fort Worth area, we arrested the operator and the owner, and some of them went to prison for the movies that they now show on these channels.

Pretty amazing. There's another important point here, and quite honestly, until I studied for this lesson, I never even thought about it.

Never came to my mind. neither Peter nor Paul recommends enrolling in a therapeutic program.

They never said, you know, you ought to sit down with a psychologist or a psychiatrist. In fact, and I want to be very careful how I say this, neither apostle even tells us that the best solution is to go to

God and have Him erase this from our memory.

[26 : 19] Instead, independent of each other, but writing the words of the Holy Spirit, they say stop and flee. That's their counsel.

their meaning here is that this is something we must do. We must stop and we must flee. These are the words of a great physician and pastor, Dr. David Martin Lloyd Jones.

I do not know a single scripture and I speak advisedly which tells me to take my sin, the particular thing that gets me down, to God in prayer and ask Him to deliver me from it and then trust by faith that He will do that.

Now that sounds a little conflicting but let's hang in there. Now that teaching is also often put like this, you must say to a man who is constantly defeated by a particular sin, I think your only hope is to take it to Christ and Christ will automatically take it away from you.

But what do the scriptures say? In Ephesians 4.28 to the man who finds himself constantly guilty of stealing. Uses the example of a thief.

[27 : 47] To a man who sees something, and he likes it, so he takes it. What am I to tell such a man? Am I to say, take that sin to Christ and he will deliver you?

No, this is what the Apostle Paul tells him. Let him that stole steal no more.

Quit stealing. Just that. Stop doing it. And if it's fornication or adultery or lustful thoughts, stop doing it.

Mortify it. Kill it. Now I'm not suggesting you're not talking to God in that process. Please don't misunderstand me. but he doesn't say, well, go and pray and Christ will, you'll be delivered.

You know, you've got to stop doing it. And you've got to be a child of God. We've already covered that. Now it is with no small measure of fear that I want to add something to the comment of Dr.

[29 : 03] Lloyd-Jones. I don't think in his comments there that he is refuting or ignoring the necessity of confessing known sin.

We're commanded to do that. That is clearly pointed out in Scripture, especially in the epistle of 1 John. 1 John 1 9.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So that's a clear command. So tonight we've been talking about one of the methods of mortifying sin in our life.

We are to abstain from fleshly lusts. Mortification happens when we stop doing it.

[30 : 06] So I looked for a few verses of Scripture and I found them. The great Apostle Paul had this to say in what I consider to be the Mount Everest of the New Testament, the book of Romans.

And here's what he had to say in the great chapter 6 of the book of Romans. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

It's far from it. Or may say, God forbid, it's strong in the Greek language. God forbid. it. How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Paul says we died. Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life.

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin, for the one who has died is freed from sin.

[31 : 54] We can be freed from it in Christ. Now, if we've died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again.

Death is no longer master over Him. for the death that He died, He died to sin once for all time, but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

So you too, consider yourselves to be dead to sin. When it crops up, guys, say, hey, I'm dead to that. I'm dead to that.

But be alive to God in Christ Jesus. therefore, sin is not to reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the parts of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your body's parts as instruments of righteousness for God.

And the Holy Spirit says, for sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under the law, you're under grace. Whole new thing. What then?

[33 : 18] Are we to sin because we're not under the law but under grace? Again, far from it, or God forbid. He says that ten times in Romans. Do you not know that the one to whom you present yourself as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of that same one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

And after being freed from sin, you became slaves to righteousness. I'm speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented the parts of your body as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your bodies as slaves to righteousness, and what will happen?

Resulting in sanctification, being recreated progressively in the image of Christ. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in relation to righteousness, therefore what benefit were you than deriving from the things of which you are now shamed?

For the outcome of those things is death. But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit resulting in sanctification and the outcome is eternal life.

[34 : 58] for the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When I was writing this, finishing this up this afternoon, I kept looking at a stop point, and then I'd read the next sentence, and I couldn't find a place to stop, so I just read to you the entire chapter of Romans 6, verses 1 to 23.

I couldn't find anything to leave out. I taught Hebrews years ago, and I think it took me two years, a year and a half or two years, and one of the guys in our class, he's not here anymore, I won't call a name, some guys would know him, he said, can't you do this in five or six weeks?

Now he said that to me privately, but I said, how do I do that? He said, leave out the unimportant parts. So I said, would you make me a list of those?

And he just hung his head and he said, I know, I know. I couldn't find a thing to leave out, so I read the whole thing. but I am going to offer just a sentence for that entire chapter and we're going to close with this tonight.

[36 : 26] We've actually been going 40 minutes almost. Here's a shortened form of chapter six. Reckon yourself dead to sin and don't do it anymore.

Pretty good advice. Reckon yourself dead to sin and don't do it anymore.