

Killing Sin

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[0 : 00] If we have focused on any truth at all in this study, it is the fact that each of us is living! is living out his life in an unholy world.

And we know that. Planet Earth has not always been unholy. Put another way, we have not always been riddled with sin and transgressions.

There was a time, however brief, some even say maybe a few weeks, but we don't know. But there was a time when there was no sin within the human family.

The human family in those days consisted of Adam and Eve. Our original parents. Adam and through him Eve were given a list of good things that they were to do.

There was one prohibition and that was that they were not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[1 : 21] But other than that, they had titanic freedoms. And God gave them a list. This is what I want you to do. Now we know the story. We read it many times in Genesis chapter 3.

Satan was on earth and entered into a discussion with Eve concerning whether or not she and her husband should partake of the fruit from that tree.

Satan gave her all kinds of reasons why it would be a good thing to do. It would make you wise. God just holding you back and everything.

And the scriptural evidence is that when she was in this discussion with the serpent who was disguised, Satan disguised as a serpent, it appears from Scripture that Adam was standing right next to her.

I used to try to convince Diane, well, Adam was in another county and he was shocked. It turns and now says right here, Adam who was with her. I think that's one of the reasons it's referred to as Adam's sin.

[2 : 40] He should have put a stop to it right there and rebuked Satan and asked the Lord to come down. But that didn't happen. We know the story. Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, gave Adam some who also ate.

And in that moment, everything changed. Everything. The sin of disobedience was introduced into the human family. The serpent was cursed and would live out his existence as a snake on his belly. It says most people fear snakes and hate snakes. I certainly do. I've told you before, three kind of snakes I hate. There are live ones, dead ones, and sticks that look like snakes.

And I've got plenty of them on my farm, by the way. So the serpent was cursed. First thing Adam and Eve did is they tried to hide from God.

Where do you go when you want to hide from God? They realized for the first time they were naked. They were embarrassed.

[3 : 55] They sewed fig leaves together. They created a human religion of works. If we can just hide our shame here, we can get back in the good graces of God. So they had fig leaf religion.

Ultimately, they were banished from the garden. Had to work by the sweat of their brows to produce enough food to survive. Planet Earth and the universe groaned for the day when the Lord would make everything new again.

It is still groaning. And we see a lot of evidence of that groaning. Liberals like to call this global warming. I think the earth is groaning for the return of the Creator.

I think the universe is groaning for the return of the Creator. I really believe that. After the garden experience, sin became the norm for the human family.

Adam and Eve had two sons. They were going to have a lot more sons and daughters, but they had two sons. Eventually, the oldest murdered his brother. We live in a sin-cursed world, and we battle sin every moment of every day, all traced right back to the garden.

[5 : 14] Because of their sin, God the Father would ultimately send His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for the remission of sins of God's people.

He became our propitiation, our atoning sacrifice, and by His death, the wrath of God directed at the sins of His chosen, were completely satisfied.

Those sins were satisfied because they were placed on Jesus. Over the course of our study, I've made reference to Dr. John Owen, one of the most brilliant men that ever lived, and his classic book, *The Mortification of Sin*.

And I've quoted a very famous sentence from that book, which says, Be killing sin or it will be killing you. Now, in a past lesson just a few weeks ago, I made you a promise that no one remembers, so I really don't have to keep it, but I'm going to.

I promised that in a future lesson, I would give you the more complete quote where this sentence was contained, and I would do it from the original autograph, which he spoke a little different English than we do.

[6 : 37] I've got a great nephew that I communicated with him. I haven't seen him in years. He wanted to know if I would get him a Bible, and I said, Absolutely, I'll get you a Bible. I'll help you work through it. And he wrote me back and said, I like a King James.

I said, I love King James. I read it. I've got several at home. But I said, You need a study Bible. We don't speak. Have you ever been to England?

No, I've never been there. Well, I've been there many times. We don't talk the same language. And so I'm going to get him both, King James and probably an American Standard ESV study Bible.

So, here's what Dr. Owen had to say in his language in his day.

Mortification abates sin's force, but doth not change its nature. Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin.

[7 : 42] Destroyed it may be, but cured it cannot be. If it be not overcome and destroyed, it will overcome and destroy the soul.

I'm continuing with Owen. And herein lies no small part of its power. It is never quiet, whether it is conquering or conquered.

Do you mortify? Do you make it your daily work? Be always at it, whilst you live.

I think that's while. Now, whilst you live, cease not a day from this work. Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.

And you see now why Winston Churchill said, we're a common people separated by a common language. Talking about the English and the Americans. And he was half and half. He was English and American. Sin is our enemy.

[8 : 48] Sin was defeated at the cross. Now, if that is true, and it is, how can sin cause so much trouble in the life of even those that have been saved and are heaven bound?

We speak of sin's dominion having been broken at Calvary. And if you get a copy of this lesson and it says Calgary, that's in Canada. I meant to put Calvary.

Yet we know that sin seems to dominate even those who believe. I heard a preacher one time in this church say, in India, a gigantic snake, bigger than anyone had ever seen, got into a house. Four-room house. Small house. The people came home and there's this gigantic snake and called the authorities and they got in position and one of them had a rifle and shot the snake in the head. Now, the snake, for all practical purposes, was dead. Not going to survive that. But for 18 hours, he twisted and he turned and he did all this stuff and destroyed the house, literally.

[10 : 13] The furniture, the walls, the house finally just collapsed. And eventually, after 18 or 20 hours, the snake died. He said, that's sin. It's been defeated, but it's still twisting and turning and wreaking havoc and that's sin.

The cold hard facts are difficult to admit, equally difficult to teach. Our propensity to sin was not eradicated at the moment of salvation.

Sin is still pleasurable. We struggle with sinful habits that are deeply ingrained and part of the spiritual warfare that we wage every day.

We've taught three or four lessons in here on indwelling sin and how difficult it is on us. While we would all admit this is most frustrating, the truth is, even as believers, we can fall into shameful sins. Sometimes those can happen on a daily basis or frequently. This is why Owen wrote so eloquently on the necessity of mortification.

[11:28] And if you don't really grasp that word, it's killing. Mortify your sins. Kill your sins. Be killing them. Now, we know the topic of mortification was not original with Dr. Owen.

So where did he get this theme? Well, I rather imagine that he read the Apostle Paul, and especially in the book of Romans, chapter 8, where so much truth is packed in so few words.

It's just beautiful. But before we get there, I want to make some comments concerning a story in the Old Testament.

Of course, it is a true story. That's why it's in the Word of God. If it wasn't a true story, it wouldn't be in the Word of God. Thousands of sermons have been preached on this story.

Thousands. Some were preached by great theologians and ministers. Others were preached by lesser-known individuals. I'm going to try and be brief, but you've heard that before.

[12:44] This story has several leading characters in addition to God Himself. There is a corrupt king by the name of Saul.

There is a priest named Samuel. There is a very evil ruler named Agag. I wonder why you'd name your boy Agag.

They did. And there was his equally evil people known as the Amalekites. Amalekites. I want you to think about these words.

I'll read them to you. This is in 1 Samuel chapter 15. First three verses. Then Samuel said to Saul, the Lord sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel.

Now therefore, listen to the words of the Lord. This is what the Lord of armies says. I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel.

[14:05] They obstructed Israel on the way while they were coming up out of Egypt. So we're going way back. And then God says through Samuel to Saul, now go and strike Amalek and completely destroy everything that He has.

Now listen to that command. Destroy it all. Everything He has. Do not spare Him.

Put to death, this is God speaking, put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.

The command that God gave Saul through His chosen priest Samuel is crystal clear. Saul is to deal ruthlessly with Agag and the Amalekites.

God even commands Saul to kill the children and babies along with all the other animals. And that leaves us really to have to ponder a very difficult question.

[15:39] How could a God of infinite love and mercy order such a severe judgment on a people, including those who ostensibly had nothing to do with the cruelty of the Amalekite warriors?

The children and babies didn't wage war. What sins had Amalek committed to bring God to the point of issuing such an extreme command?

I read this passage in my Sunday school class about 38 years ago. This wasn't here. This was a hill. But I read it about 38 years ago and then I asked the class, does anyone in here have a problem with this?

And one woman in the class raised her hand and said, I always remembered it, I don't believe God would do that. I don't believe God would do that.

The God that I know, this is the woman, the God that I know from Scripture would never order the killing of children and babies. And I told her, I said, look, I know how you feel.

[16:55] I really do. But if God did not say that, it literally opens Pandora's box as far as inspiration, authority, and the authenticity of the Bible.

If we can't believe this passage, should we believe John 3.16? I mean, if this patches is wrong, what else is wrong? And I did have a friend of mine that did say this, he believed this, he said, I think those children and babies went right to heaven.

He said, I believe they were in heaven. The Amalekites were an ancient Nobanic people. They had descended from Esau.

Now, that probably should speak volumes to you. Remember, he had a brother Jacob, and what did God say? Esau I hated, and Jacob I loved.

He hated Esau. Well, these people came from Esau. Esau. They lived in the region of southern Canaan. I've been there at 36,000 feet.

[18:20] We didn't land. And were bitter enemies of Israel. Bitter enemies of Israel. They had attacked Israel on numerous occasions as recorded in Exodus, as recorded in Deuteronomy.

They were basically backstabbers. God made note that they even attacked Israel when they were most vulnerable. In Exodus 17, verse 14, God said this, I will utterly wipe out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

And we don't hear people talking about them a lot in our day, do we? Except in here. When God gave Moses the law, and the law, but that is more than the Ten Commandments, more than the Decalogue, the entire body of law, He incorporated this passage in Deuteronomy 25, starting in verse 17.

God is speaking, remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you came out of Egypt, and how he confronted you on the way and attacked you among all the stragglers at your rear when you were tired and weary, and he did not fear God.

So it shall come about when the Lord your God is given, you rest from all your surrounding enemies in the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, that you shall wipe out the mention of the name Amalek from under heaven, you must not forget, can't forget this command.

[20 : 14] God says, you rest, you build your strength, and then wipe them out. Wipe them out. Saul attacked the Amalekites as commanded.

Saul ordered the death of the people as commanded, and they were killed, but not all of them. Now what did God say?

Kill them all. But Saul spared the king, a man named Agag.

In addition to Agag, Saul kept the choicest animals. He kept the best sheep, the best oxen, the best lambs. It is believed that Saul, because of pride, wanted to put Agag on display as a trophy of his warrior skills, Saul's warrior skills.

In other words, Saul was very proud of his accomplishment. God had done it, but Saul was taking credit. So we see here in Deuteronomy and other passages that I've read that Saul was partially obedient to the command of God.

[21 : 47] Partially obedient. And allow me to offer a very important comment at this juncture. Partial obedience to any command of God is no obedience at all.

It's sin. Partial obedience is sin. R.C. Sproul, now with the Lord himself, described sin.

He said, any sin we commit in violation of the word of God, the teaching of God, he is cosmic treason directed at the triune God.

If we sin, we engage in cosmic treason according to Dr. Sproul. Well, the priest Samuel finds out Agag's still alive.

He can't believe it. He wants to go see this for himself. So he goes. And there's Saul, and he's having a good visit with Agag.

[23 : 01] And Samuel walks up and says, he's supposed to be dead. I want to spare him. I'm the king. I spared him. So Samuel, the priest, grabs Saul's sword, and many a sermon has been preached over the centuries on the mortification of sin.

We're going to experience a mortification or Agag is. Many of those sermons had the same title, hacking Agag to pieces.

So when Mike preaches on that, remember where you got it. Samuel picked up the sword. We're called to pick up our sword, the sword of the spirit, the word of God, and hack our own sin to pieces. Samuel picked up Saul's sword, and he hacked Agag to little pieces. He mortified Agag.

We're supposed to do the same thing with our sins. Using the sword of the spirit, using the word of God. Consider these words from the word of God. Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 8.

[24 : 22] So then brothers and sisters, we are under obligation not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you're living in accord with the flesh, you're going to die.

Well, that's pretty dramatic. But if by the spirit, if you're living by the spirit, you are putting to death the deeds of the body, if you do that, you will live.

You will live. Romans chapter 8 verses 12 and 13. Well, in a word, Paul is talking there about mortification.

The same thing John Owen talked about years later. Now, Paul is not even remotely suggesting that if you come up with a daily system of mortifying sin, you will be guaranteed entrance into heaven.

All you got to do is get to a certain level of mortification and then you're grazing the skirts right into heaven.

[25 : 36] That's not what he's suggesting there. Why not? That would be salvation by merit. Salvation is never by merit. It's by the unmerited favor of God.

But one of the characteristics of being a believer is to be putting to death the deeds of the body. We're commanded to do that right there. And remember, partial obedience is sin.

So you might want to work on that scripture this week. Jesus gave us words that expose the seriousness of sin in this life and now he's talking about people that have been saved.

He's talking about the saved people. He did this through Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount. Here are some of the words of Jesus in that great sermon.

Matthew 5, 29 and 30. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

[26 : 52] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Pretty dramatic language from the Master, the Lord of the universe. And we need to get something straight, really, as we read those passages.

Jesus is not here calling for salvation by self-mutilation. There are a number of religions that do that. Islam does that. They have a whole deal where they're beating themselves.

Even within so-called Christianity, there are guys that volunteer to be crucified because they think that's going to bring them closer to the Lord. Jesus never taught salvation by self-mutilation. salvation. The Lord is here calling for the mortification of the deeds of the body. The deeds of the body.

[28 : 00] And this passage has been greatly misinterpreted, greatly misapplied. One of the great theologians of the church in the second century was Origen.

Like all believers, he struggled with sin, but he took this command of the Lord literally, and so he had himself castrated in a misguided effort to fulfill this command.

He said, well, if I can just be castrated, then I'm going to be okay. I'm quite certain that Origen was very troubled and disappointed when after being castrated, he soon realized that part of his body was gone, but his propensity to sin was still present.

That hadn't diminished at all. We should and we must mortify our fleshly sins. We must have its power, life, vigor, and strength taken away.

And you might say, but I can't do it. Well, welcome to the club. None of us can. None of us can. Only the indwelling Holy Spirit of God can accomplish that.

[29 : 28] We in our own strength will like Origen soon realize that our self-efforts to do so have failed. world. Referring back now to our reading of Romans chapter 8 verses 12 to 13 which I just read, give you a comment from an authority on Paul and on Romans, namely Dr.

Lloyd-Jones, David Martin Lloyd-Jones, he had this to say about these two verses. It is here for the first time in this eighth chapter that we come to the realm of practical application.

all we have had up to this point has been a general description of the Christian in his character and position.

But now the apostle has really come explicitly to the doctrine of sanctification. And just to remind you, we studied that last year in our previous study, that's being recreated in the image of Christ. It's a lifelong process, by the way. Here we are told exactly how in practice the Christian becomes sanctified, or to state it differently, here we are told in detail and in practice how the Christian is to wage the battle against sin.

[31 : 03] That's the battle we're in, guys. It's the battle we're in. As a reminder, again, sanctification is that process, of recreation in the image of Christ through the power of the indwelling spirit and of his word.

We're never going to be totally sanctified in this life, but we will be one day when we arrive in heaven and see Jesus as he is.

That is when we shall be glorified sanctified with Christ. But let me say this, before we can even begin to be sanctified, we must first be justified.

Justification is a judicial declaration that our sins have been forgiven based upon the finished work of Christ on the cross. And let me say this, and I read this a few weeks ago, it just really struck me. In regard to justification, when we are justified, and we studied that in our study of salvation God's way, when we are justified, we receive all of the justification we're ever going to have.

[32 : 30] we get it all. Our justification never increases, but our sanctification does.

Sanctification does increase. There's another interesting point here. The process of justification, here's the order, you're justified, and then you are sanctified, and then you're glorified. All Romans 8. But we've left out a step. And it's a critical step, it's the first step, we skipped it. This must occur before we can be justified, which must occur before we can be sanctified, which must occur before we can be glorified.

Well, what's that step? we must be adopted into the family of God, by God, where we become joint heirs with Christ.

You've got to be an adopted child of God. And that again is Romans 8. The great Dr. Burkhoff, when he talked about all this, he got one paragraph on adoption.

[33 : 52] And he didn't do it, that was all he put, one paragraph. You could write in volumes. I heard a message just a few weeks ago by Dr. Derek Thomas, great, great preacher from Wales, preaches this Western Theological Seminary in South Carolina and on the staff of Ligonier on adoption.

We become joint heirs with Christ. And you can get hold of the previous lesson on salvation in God's way. You can read about those in there. The Word of God is in Paul's writings or anywhere else, does not promise immediate freedom from the harassment of sin.

Dr. McBride had to deal with that one time because a lady came forward and said, I've been saved. I see you have water in the baptism. I'd like to be baptized. And we did. The next day, morning, she's going to work, she got robbed at gunpoint.

I wasn't the chief then, so we didn't solve it. She came to Mike over at lunchtime and said, what kind of Christianity is this? I got robbed this morning. He said, you're not in heaven.

We sin, don't we, guys? We're not in heaven. We battle it. I hope we're battling it. The Word of God found in Paul's writings or anywhere does not give us that immediate freedom from the harassment of sin.

[35 : 23] Nowhere does Paul teach or describe a crisis moment sanctification whereby the believer is instantly made perfect. Unlike many such people in our day, Paul does not teach a theology of catchy phrases.

Here's one from about 30 years ago. Let go and let God. Some of you remember that? Let go and let God. And that phrase was very much in vogue about 30 years ago before some of you were even born.

The let go and let God crowd was like the man who sat on a stump and wanted to see if God was going to save him or not. Sat there 40 years, died, and went to hell. Neither does Paul embrace decisional regeneration.

In that theology, they say, well, a person decides he's ready to be born again, and everything falls into place, and the matter of sin is settled once and for all. Don't have to worry about it anymore.

What does Paul talk about in his books in the New Testament? He speaks of a continuous struggle with sin whereby we are continuously putting to death the deeds of the body.

[36 : 43] So what is Paul talking about? He's talking about a process that is accomplished by the Spirit of God in the life of the believer.

In the words of Dr. MacArthur, the Apostle Paul is describing a way of life where we seek to throttle sin and crush it from our lives, sapping it of its strength, rooting it out, and depriving it of its influence.

That is what it means to mortify sin. And that leads all to a very important question. Very important. How do we mortify sin? How do we mortify sin? We'll start answering that question next time.

Thank you.