

Grace Bible Church

2015 Biblical Counseling Conference

Session #16

Spirit-Enabled Mortification of Sin and Vivification of our Faith

Are we saved “in” our sin or “from” our sin?¹

Introduction:

- Giving the Context: The Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - Based upon a believer’s union in Christ
 - Comes out into a believer’s communion with Christ – A grace-filled walk
 - Guarding your heart and paying close attention to yourself — Prov 4:23; 1 Tim. 4:16; Acts 20:28

“But what is the difference between examining oneself and becoming introspective? I suggest that we cross the line from self-examination to introspection when, in a sense, we do nothing but examine ourselves, and when such self-examination becomes the main and chief end in our life. We are meant to examine ourselves periodically, but if we are always doing it, always, as it were, putting our soul on a plate and dissecting it, that is introspection. And if we are always talking to people about ourselves and our problems and troubles, and if we are forever going to them with that kind of frown upon our face and saying: I am in great difficulty- it probably means that we are all the time centered upon ourselves. That is introspection, and that in turn leads to the condition known as morbidity.” Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 17
 - Dependent Spiritual Exercise — 1 Tim. 4:7-9

“The error of Justification by works is in trusting to the discipline of your soul to save your soul; but the opposite to trusting to your works is not to do nothing, it is to do everything but not to put your trust in any of it. It is not the works that are wrong, it is the faith in your works, trusting in your works.” Jones, *SD*, 211
 - An ongoing repentant lifestyle coupled with one’s pursuit of purity by faith in Christ (Repentance and Faith always go hand in hand)

Repentance - “Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after, new obedience” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q87)

Faith - “As repentance is the negative aspect of conversion, turning from one’s sin, so faith is the positive aspect laying hold upon the promises and the work of Christ... (pisteuo) to believe what someone says, to accept a statement (particularly of a religious nature) as true...personal trust as distinct from mere credence or belief”²

¹ Much of this material is taken from *Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith*. All rights are reserved.

I. The Doctrine (of mortification and purity)

a. Chief verses:

i. Rom. 8:12-13

“So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for it you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

ii. Gal 5:16

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

iii. Col. 3:1ff (:5)

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”

iv. Titus 2:11-14

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

b. Supporting passages:

- Matthew 5:29-30
- Romans 6-8
- Romans 13:14
- 1 Corinthians 9:27
- Ephesians 4:22-24
- Etc.

II. Defined (don't ever separate one's endeavor of “killing our sin” apart from the active pursuit of holiness in Jesus by faith)

A discipline of grace whereby a Christian pursuing purity (holiness) and resting on Christ's finished work on the Cross – aggressively strives against sin in his life and thus weakens it so that its power and predominance is subdued and practically destroyed while at the same time aggressively strives towards a growing faith in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

III. The Goal

The putting on of a faithful, holy walk in joyful obedience to Jesus Christ for His honor and glory while at the same time putting off of sinful practices by the help of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 5:9; Rom 13:14).

IV. The Participants

- a. God – Rom. 8:13
- b. Believer – Rom. 8:13
- c. The Church Body (Gal. 6:1; Heb. 3:12-13, 10:24-25)

V. Distinguishing Factors

- a. Of those sins that are not
- b. Of those sins that are

VI. Personal Hindrances to this Grace Pursuit (many of these are manifestations of our pride)

- a. If Unsaved (Rom. 8:8; Mt. 15:8)
- b. Laziness (Rom. 12:11; 2 Pt. 1:5)
- c. Apathy (Zeph. 1:12; Rom. 12:11)
- d. Treasuring secret sin (s) (Ps. 66:18)
- e. Weariness (Gal. 6:9)
- f. Ignorance of theology (Eph.5:6,15,17; Col. 2:8) . Be careful of the imbalance with the Gospel itself (emphasis on union or communion).
- g. Misplaced priorities (Luke 10:38-42)
- h. Misplaced love & trust (Rev. 2:4-5; Ps 115; 135)
- i. Bad company – 1 Cor 15:33
- j. Other...

VII. Errors to Contend with

- “Beware of supposing that a teacher of religion is to be trusted because, although he holds some unsound views, yet he ‘teaches a great deal of truth’. Such a teacher is precisely the man to do you harm; poison is always most dangerous when it is given in small doses and mixed with wholesome food.” J.C. Ryle ,Churches Beware, 76
- We do not practice the disciplines of grace as self-justifying or self-advancing like these: These are what mortification is not
 - a. Asceticism
 - b. Pietism
 - i. Mysticism
 - c. Quietism
 - d. Antinomianism
 - e. Legalism
 - f. Entire Sanctification
 - g. Diverting attention from a greater sin to a lesser sin
 - h. Striving after a peaceful temperament (Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction*, 162)
 - i. Etc.

VIII.Principles to Practice

- a. Slowing down to Meditate on the Gospel of Christ every day (especially on what Christ did on your behalf and how your union in Him directly affects your communion with Him – Lk. 7:47) Be Balanced!!!
- b. Repentance/faith as a lifestyle (Eph. 4; Col. 3).
- c. Share your area of struggle with another stronger believer (Gal 6:1ff)
- d. No provisions made for your flesh (Rom. 13:14)
- e. Surface up (through data gathering) and correct (renew) all the rationalizations for the sin
- f. Radical amputation (Mt. 5:29-30)
- g. Focus on pursuing, knowing and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (Jer 2:13; Rom. 13:14; Rev 2:5)
- h. Be diligent and fervent in spirit in this endeavor and seek assistance when needed (Rom. 12:11; Gal 6:1ff)
- i. Pursuing love for others “One –anothering” (all 35+ of them)

IX. Some excellent quotes by our Puritan brethren

- “True mourning for sin must flow from spiritual convictions of the evil, and vileness, and dimmable nature of sin...true morning for sin is more for the evil that is in sin, than the evil that comes by sin; more because it dishonours God, and wounds Christ, and grieves the Spirit, and makes the soul unlike God, than because it damns the soul. Now, there are many that mourn for sin, not so much for the evil that is in it, as for the evil that it brings with it...” Matthew Mead, *The Almost Christian Discovered*, 56-57
- “A truly mortified man is like a warrior: he will either kill or be killed. He will kill his sins or else his sin will kill him. Now examine yourselves in this: are you only fencers, to sport and play with your lusts, or are you warriors who fight with an implacable opposition against sin? Do you only give a slight scare to sin or have you given it a deadly wound?” Christopher Love, *The Mortified Christian*, 38
- “Though Christ justifies us from the guilt of sin, we must labor to be freed from the filth of sin.” Christopher Love, 4
- “Mortification prunes all the graces of God, and makes room for them in our hearts to grow.” John Owen
- “Exercise and success (in mortification) are the two main cherishers of grace in the heart, let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness who walks not over the bellies of his lusts.” John Owen
- “It will bring disgrace on the Christian testimony and harden others against the gospel when they see such a contrast between profession and reality.” John Owen
- “Set faith at work on Christ for the killing of thy sin...Live in this, and thou wilt die a conqueror. Mortification of sin is peculiarly from the death of Christ. This is the reason why He died. Such faith will look to Christ for power to mortify sin, and for grace to be conformed to Him in His death.” John Owen
- “Mortification can never be thought of as separated from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He brings the work to a consummation. He convinces of sin in the first place, and reveals the help that is in Christ. He establishes the heart to expect relief, and He alone brings the cross of Christ into our hearts with its sin-killing power; for by the Spirit we are baptized into the death of Christ. He is both Author and Finisher of sanctification. His presence gives support in this essential work.” John Owen
- “Many do their sins, as mariners do by their goods, cast them out in a storm, wishing for them again in a calm... Many confess their sins, but with no intent to forsake sin; they confess the sins they have committed, but do not leave the sins they have confessed.” Mead, 59
- “All sin may be chained, and yet the heart not changed; and so the nature of the sinner is the same as ever. A dog chained up, is a dog still, as much as if he was let loose to devour.” Mead, 62
- “Exercise grace whenever you would see it; idle habits are not perceived. Believe and repent till you feel that you do believe and repent, and love God till you feel that you love him.” Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 903

Conclusion:

Resources:

Sinclair B. Ferguson. ‘The Mortification of Sin,’ taken from the book, John Owen on the Christian Life

Christopher Love, *The Mortified Christian*

Kris Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within*

Wayne Mack, *A Fight to the Death*

Matthew Mead, *The Almost Christian Discovered*

John Owen, *Overcoming Sin & Temptation*, edited by Kelly Kopic & Justin Taylor (Crossway Publishers)

Stuart & Zondra Scott, *Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith*

Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*