

# MORTIFYING THE FLESH

## WEEK 6: PRACTICAL STEPS FOR MORTIFYING SIN. PART III

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- In this 6-week series we are going to discuss *how to put to death the flesh*.
- Colossians 3:5 “Therefore *consider the members of your earthly body as dead* to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”
- Romans 8:13 “...for if 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.”
- **Killing our sin or flesh is not a once off action nor is it done with your own strength alone.**
- To live the Christian life as God intended, the believer must be actively killing sin in their life.
- **“Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.” John Owen**
- As Owen further states, to clear the woods of sin in our heart is a critical part of the whole process of sanctification. The process of killing sin in our hearts not only allows us to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel but also brings more assurance that we are children of God.
- When our hearts are set on pleasing the father, we are going to want to walk in a way that pleases him, not the world, not ourselves but Christ alone. To do this, we must be able to identify and put to death sin.
- **This is the heartbeat of progressive sanctification, a life lived for God by mortifying our flesh.**
- Week 1: What is the “flesh?”
- Week 2: How important is my new identity? (Col. 3:1-4)
- Week 3: How does sin work in every aspect of my new life?
- Week 4: Practical steps for mortifying sin. Part I
- Week 5: Practical steps for mortifying sin. Part II
- **Week 6: Practical steps for mortifying sin. Part III**

## OUR 2<sup>ND</sup> PRACTICAL STEP: SIN IS INCONSISTENT WITH OUR NEW LIFE

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- **When you sin, it is inconsistent with who you now are in Christ.**
- **Romans 5:19** “For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”
- We were, before being saved by Christ, in Adam, or classified as sinners.
- Now, as those who have been born again, we have been made righteous in Christ.
- **For us to sin is to act like the old man, to act like we are still in Adam and have not been renewed in Christ.**
- New men live new lives, for us to do otherwise is a contradiction to our new life.
- **Each time we sin we are effectively telling God that we desire our way instead of His.** That we think our way is the way to life and holiness and that His way is second best.
- **When we sin, we are acting like Adam in disobedience to the commands of God.**
- **1 John 2:3-6** “By this we know that we have come to know Him, **if we keep His commandments.** The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ **and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;** but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. **By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”**
- These are some very hard words from John that we need to take into our own hearts.
- **If we say that we are born again, what John is saying is that our life needs to back that up.**
- He’s not talking about perfection but the one who is striving to keep their life according to Christ.
- As we think about mortifying or killing our sin, we must know that by following the commands of Christ we are going to be automatically killing sin in our lives.
- Our desire should be to live a life in which we *walk in the same manner* as Christ walked.
- **How do we know what God commands of us so that we may walk in them?**
- We must be willing to read and study the Scriptures.
- There is nothing that God desires for us that can be found outside of the Bible. All that He not only has for us but also has given to us is in the Bible. We truly need nothing more.
- God is not hiding something from you or keeping some subtle truth from you, He wants you to grow in godliness and holiness and He has given you the tools to succeed.
- We should never doubt if God is for us, if we are born again, we know that God is on our side and He desires us to live according to His Word.
- **If there is something we don’t understand it is not the Bible’s fault but our own obstructed vision.**
- We have everything, we just have to be willing to use it.

## OUR 3<sup>RD</sup> PRACTICAL STEP: PUT-OFF SIN AND PUT-ON CHRIST

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- The Christian life is often times mistaken for a life of self-denial.
- Christians so often speak of their spiritual life in terms of what they are *not doing*.
- I gave up something or I don't watch or listen to or read something.
- We define ourselves as Christians by what is lacking in our life.
- Listen to how the Bible describes the sinner turned saint:
- Ephesians 4:28 “He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.”
  - The one who steals is not classified as a former thief or one who does not steal. Rather, he is now known as the one who labors (instead of steals) for the purpose of having something to share with those who need it.
  - The ones who usually steal are the ones who are in need, so the former thief is now helping others, so they are not tempted to steal as he did.
- This is a classic case of putting off and putting one. There is no longer the sin of stealing (as the old man in Adam was classified) but now there is the *doing* work *and* practically loving the neighbor who is also someone who is in need.
- Listen to Ephesians 4:29 “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”
  - The exhortation is not just to stop with unwholesome words, but to replace those words with ones that are edifying and give grace to the hearers.
  - Paul does not just say *stop talking with corrupt or worthless words!* That does not classify a Christian. Anyone can stop using worthless words.
  - Be he says not only stop with the worthless words, but now speak with words that are going to be edifying to those who hear.
  - Once again, just like the one who stole was to be a blessing to the people in need, true Christian love looks around and acts as Christ did.
  - Here in **verse 29**, the words are for others, to edify them...to build them up or to promote someone's growth in their Christian walk.
  - Notice too that it is not just general edification, but Paul says *to the need of the moment*.
  - We are to know the words that we are saying and make sure that they are actually needed when we are saying them. There is a direct purpose, those who hear us should receive grace.

- Your actions and your speech are not so much about what you are not doing but what you are doing and how you are blessing those who are around you.
- The Christian life is not about emptying but about filling.
- We don't strive to empty our minds and be free of thought but we want to be filled with the Spirit so that we are able to live like Christ.

### Colossians 3:1-17

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- Paul starts with the simple statement about those who have been born again.
- **Verses 1-4** <sup>1</sup>Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”
- **Before Paul even gets to what sin we are to mortify and what we are to put in its place, he talks about what has been done and what we must do because of that.**
- As Christians, we are to *keep seeking the thing above* and *set your mind on things above*. The reason for this is in **verse 3**...*you have died and your life is hidden with Christ*.
- The reason we are to put off the old man and the put on the new is twofold...the old man is dead and we are now alive in Christ.
- If this is your new reality, you are going to be searching after the things of God. You will no longer be like the old man in your thinking, but you will start to look more and more like the new man.
- He also talks about how it is all going to end by connecting our current walk or lifestyle with our eternal standing. If we are *in Christ*, we are going to look like Christ and therefore be in glory with Him.
- **Verses 5-11** <sup>5</sup>Therefore **consider the members of your earthly body as dead** to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. <sup>6</sup>**For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience**, <sup>7</sup>and **in them you also once walked, when you were living in them**. <sup>8</sup>But now you also, **put them all aside**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>**Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices**, <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self **who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him** <sup>11</sup>a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.”
- There's a long list here to consider! Our old man and his old ways were all against God.
- Notice that Paul starts with *consider the members of your earthly body as dead*.
- Here is that *consider* again, this time it is a little different.

- The actual Greek word is νεκρώω (where we get necromancy in English) which means *to deaden or cause to cease completely...to put to death*. This is also in the **imperative**, it's a command from Paul.
- This is based upon **verse 3**, *for you have died...* so the truth is you have died and now you have to believe that truth and walk in that truth.
- **Verses 5-11** show us what the “alive” dead man looked like so that if we see any of these traits, we can be sure we are acting like that dead man.
- Notice also again the theme of obedience in Paul's writing. Why is wrath coming upon those who are walking in sin? He says it is because they are *sons of disobedience*.
- Our obedience (remember **Rom 5:19** and **1 John 2:3-6**) is directly linked again to our eternal salvation and standing before the Lord. This is how you used to be, not who you are now, you now obey what the Word says to you.
  - This obedience is not done to earn God's favor or hope to somehow get in good standing with Him.
  - It is so important to realize that Paul is saying this *after* he has already said what has been done for you.
  - Essentially you can summarize what Paul says: Christ died for you, you have outwardly shown that you have repented and put your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Your new life is in Christ and you will show the world this new life by how you are currently living.
- **Verse 10** is a great verse for hope... *who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him*.
  - This verb used for *is being renewed* is actually in the passive state. Here is what Paul is saying, as you are killing the sin in your body, your active duty, you are being renewed more and more into the image of Christ.
  - You are not striving to be renewed but this is happening to you as you are living your Christian life in the new man.
  - You are becoming more and more Christlike as you are putting off the old ways of living.
  - This is a great encouragement for us. This is the power of the Holy Spirit working in us as we are working in our own lives.
- **Verses 12-17** <sup>12</sup>So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on** a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup>Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. <sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

- Since the Christian life is not only about what you are not doing, Paul now talks about how we are to fill the void that is left when we put off the old man.
- We don't want to just leave a vacuum for anything to come in, but we want to be purposeful to make sure that what we are doing is now in obedience to what the Lord has commanded.
- There are four motives here which encourage us as Christian to put on the new life.
- **We now have the grace of Christ. (vv. 12-14)**
- When we talk about God's grace, it is God's unmerited favor towards sinners.
- Listen to the words of Paul before he tells them what they are to put on...
  - You have been chosen of God, this is your election to salvation.
  - You are holy, you have been set apart from the world to live for God.
  - You are loved, as you grow in your love towards God there will be a desire to walk in the newness of life that He has provided.
  - You are forgiven by God. God's forgiveness is not only complete but it is final. That means there are no conditions or terms that you are to meet in your new life.
- Chosen, set apart, loved and forgiven is where you now stand because of God's grace towards you.
- Since we have been lavished with God's grace, we are to live in a certain way for Him.
- **We now have the peace of Christ. (v. 15)**
- This is not the feeling of peace but being at peace with Christ. We are no longer at war with God as His enemy but we are at rest and secure.
- When we sin, we shatter that peace that we have with Christ. This means that when we make decisions or we are faced with temptations, we should ask if what we are doing is consistent with being at peace with Christ.
- This peace is also linked relationally with one another. When we strive to put on our new man, we are going to be living at peace with one another.
- Not only that, as Paul says, we are going to be thankful.
- A thankful heart is indicative of a heart which is at peace with God.
- Thankfulness means that we are no longer striving to get something that we think we deserve or we are upset because we didn't get what we thought we needed.
- A Christian with a thankful heart should not be an anomaly but the standard.
- **We now have the Word of Christ. (v. 16)**

- As Christians we now can understand and apply the Word of God in our hearts and minds.
- We are called to allow the Word to literally take up residence in our heart. It is to be the driving force behind all that we desire and do.
- We must desire to have more and more of God’s Word implanted into our hearts so that we are able to live out the way that He desires for us.
- Paul links two things here which I think are very helpful...our knowledge of the Word and how we treat one another and how we worship God.
- The more that we have God’s Word in our hearts and minds the better we are going to be able to teach and admonish one another.
  - In the direct context here, Paul says that the world’s ways are no good. If we don’t have the Word of Christ, we are left depending on what we think is right and that will not bring comfort to anyone.
  - Our worship of Christ in hymns and our singing with thankfulness all points to our new hearts being settled and content in Christ.
- **We now have the name of Christ. (v. 17)**
- The simplest, most basic rule of thumb for living the Christian life is to do everything, whether word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus. To do everything in the name of Jesus is to act consistently with who He is and what He wants.<sup>1</sup>
- When we act consistently with who Christ is, we are acting like our new nature, not the old man.
- We are putting to death the deeds of the old man by actually doing the deeds of the new man.
- Pay attention again to the fact that Paul uses *thankfulness* to describe the new person in Christ.
- This is the fifth of six references in Colossians to thanksgiving (Col. 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2). **When we remember that Paul was a Roman prisoner when he wrote this letter, it makes this emphasis on thanksgiving that much more wonderful.**<sup>2</sup>
- Our goal in our Christian life is to be more like Christ, to be being made more and more into His image. We can’t do that if we continually desire to live like the old man or we are not thankful for how and what the Lord has done and is doing in our lives.
- As we review these four spiritual motivations for godly living, we are impressed with the centrality of Jesus Christ. **We forgive because Christ forgave us** (Col. 3:13). It is **the peace of Christ that should rule in our hearts** (Col. 3:15). **The Word of Christ should dwell in us richly** (Col. 3:16). **The name of Christ should be our identification and our authority.** “Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:11).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Colossians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 141.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

- **Since we are united with Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we have all the resources we need for holy living. But we must be spiritually motivated.** Because we have experienced the grace of Christ, we want to live for Him. Because we have enjoyed the peace of Christ, we want to obey Him. We have been enriched by the Word of Christ, and dignified by the name of Christ; therefore, we want to honor and glorify Him.<sup>4</sup>

## “HOW-TO” FOR PUTTING OFF AND PUTTING ON

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- Probably the most important step you can take is paying attention to your mind and your thought life.
- It is from this area of life that you are going to be motivated to live.
- There is no other person who talks to us more than ourselves. We are constantly living under the voice which is in our own head telling us what to think and then do.
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5 “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”**
- Our fight is not against our body but against the worldly principles and temptations which seek to control our minds. Our putting off sin and putting on Christ will be evident as we live our daily life.
- We put off sin by taking that thought or idea captive, measuring it against Scripture, agreeing with God about what He says and then putting on what the righteous action is to be.
- This is why self-made rules and regulations don’t work, they are against the body not the heart.
- Our fight is not to stop being lazy but to know what God says about work. Our fight is not to stop being angry with each other but know what the Bible says about selfishness and pride. Our fight is not to try really hard not to be selfish, but to know what the Bible says about dying to self and living for Christ.
- If all we do is modify behavior then all we are achieving is putting lipstick on a pig. The idols and desires of the heart are still there and active, but now excuses are being made for their sinful actions.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



## Discipline and Our Holiness

- Hebrews 5:14 “But solid food is for the mature, **who because of practice** have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”
- 1 Timothy 4:7-8 “But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness**; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, **but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.**”
- In both of these verses the word for *practice* and *discipline* is γυμνάζω. It is where we get our modern-day English word gymnasium, or gym. It is a place for exercise, training and competition.
- We are to train, discipline and practice what we read and know from the Bible.
- This has, not only current life implications but also eternal life. Once again, Paul is linking our current life’s practices with our eternal life’s rewards.
- This is also used once in the negative.
- 2 Peter 2:14 “...having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, **having a heart trained** in greed, accursed children...”
- Speaking of those who are walking in the flesh, those who are disobedient, they have trained or disciplined themselves in the way of sin.
- This is why the putting off and the putting on is so important in the life of the believer. You are now training yourself, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to be more like Christ as you put off sin and put on righteousness.
- We do this, not because we have enough moxie or guts, but because we have submitted our lives to Christ and desire to live like the new man with a new nature for the glory of God.