

The Call to Mortify Sin

Romans 8.12-13 “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – 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.”

Gal 5:24 “Now those who belong to Christ have **crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires”

Col. 3: 5 “Therefore **consider** the members of your earthly body **as dead to [sin]**.”

“The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.... that it may not have life and power to bring forth the works or deeds of the flesh is the constant duty of believers.

“Every unmortified sin will certainly do two things:

[1.] It will weaken the soul, and deprive it of its vigour.

[2.] It will darken the soul, & deprive it of its comfort & peace.”

~ Owen *The Mortification of Sin*

The Scriptures use other varied images to picture a believer’s battle with indwelling sin:

Change in Wardrobe	Eph 4:22-24 “Lay aside the old self... 1 Pet 2:1 “Putting aside all malice...”
Warfare	Rom 13:12 “Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Eph 6:11 “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day.” 1 Timothy 6:12-13 “But flee from these things, you man of God... <i>Fight the good fight of faith.</i> ” 1 Pet 2:11 “Abstain from fleshly lusts which <i>wage war against the soul.</i> ”
Flee as a fugitive	1 Cor 6.18 “Flee youthful lusts”
Cleansing Pollution	2 Cor. 7:11, “Cleanse yourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Understanding What it Means to Mortify Sin

What Mortification is NOT:

- Religious Self-effort

Col. 2:20-23 “These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

- It is not utter annihilation of sin in this life

It’s important to have a proper understanding of Romans 6:12ff

“The Christian has died to sin, we noted this does not mean that sin has died in him. It remains, and it is still sin. What has changed is not its presence within our hearts, but its status (it no longer reigns) and our relationship to it (we are no longer its slaves).”

~ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life*

- Achieved Casually

“Not only has our relationship to it (sin) changed, but God has planted within us his divine seed (1 Jn. 3:9), and in this sense has ‘added’ to our powers as well as subtracting from sin’s status! We have good reason to enter the conflict with the enemy of sin in optimistic mood! Not for a moment, however, dare we delude ourselves into thinking that the victory will be won consistently without blood, sweat and tears.”

~Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life*

- Partial Obedience
- Managing one sin, but all sin!
- Exchanging one sin for another sin
- Covering/Repressing/ Internalizing
- Experiencing occasional conquests

What Mortification is:

The obligation of all who by faith in Christ and have been pardoned from the **penalty of sin** to actively weaken the **power of sin** in their lives.

1Peter 2:24 “He Himself bore our sin, in His body on the tree (**penalty of sin**) that we might die to sin and live to righteousness (**power of sin**).”

Titus 2:11-12 “For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men (**penalty of sin**) instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age (**power of sin**).”

Rom 6.12-13 “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts and do not go on presenting your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

Romans 8:13 “If by the spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body you will live.”

Heb 12:14 “Strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

1 Thes 4:3 “Abstain from immorality.”

1 John 3:3 “Everyone who has this hope purifies himself even He is pure.”

1 Cor. 6:14 “Flee Immorality”

2 Cor. 7:1 “Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh an spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

2 Peter 1:5 “Applying all diligence...”

“To kill a man, or any other living thing, is to take away the principle of all his strength, vigour, and power, so that he cannot act or exert, or put forth any proper actings of his own; so it is in this case.

~ Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

How Do I Mortify My Sin?

Through Dependent Faith

Romans 8:13 “If *by the Spirit* you are putting to death the deed of the body, you will live”

“All other ways of mortification are vain, all helps leave us helpless; it must be done by the Spirit... Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of a self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world... A man may easier see without eyes, speak without a tongue, than truly mortify one sin without the Spirit.” ~ Owen

John 15:5 “Neither can you [bear fruit] unless you abide in me.... apart from me, you can do nothing”

Hebrews 2:18 “For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Gal 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me; and the live that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.”

“There is no death of sin without the death of Christ.” ~ Owen

By Understanding the Essence of every Temptation

Gen 3:1-5

- The Temptation to Doubt God’s Word (vs. 1)
- The Temptation to Deny God’s Word (vs. 4)
- The Temptation to Distrust God’s Character (vs. 5)

James 1:13-16

- Do not blame God for temptation (vs. 13)
- Do blame your own desires (vs. 14)
- Recognize the deadly development (vs. 15)
- Do not be deceived about temptation’s ultimate source (vs. 16)
- Do not be deceived about sin’s ultimate outcome (vs. 16)

1 Cor. 10:13 “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but also with the temptation will provide a way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it.”

By Structuring Life to Avoid Temptation

Rom 13:14 "Make no provision for the flesh"

1 Tim 4:7 "Discipline yourself for the sake of godliness"

1 Cor 9:24-27 "I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

Ask yourself:

- When does this temptation/sin usually occur?
- What happens prior to the temptation/sin?
- What can I do to avoid it?

"Sin aims always at the utmost; every time it rises up to tempt or entice, might it have its own course, it would go out to the utmost sin in that kind. Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could; every covetous desire would be oppression, every thought of unbelief would be atheism, might it grow to its head."

~ Owen

By Meditating on the Scriptures

Ps. 119:11 "Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you."

John 17:17 "Sanctify them in Your truth; Your word is truth."

Matt 4 & Luke 4 The Temptations of Jesus = "It is written."

Rom 12:2 "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword... and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

"Make resistance against temptations by arguments drawn from the honor of God, the love of God, your union in communion with God; and from the blood of Christ, the death of Christ, the kindness of Christ, the intercession of Christ, and the glory of Christ; and from the voice of the Spirit, the Counsel of the Spirit, the comforts of the spirit, the presence of the spirit, the seal of the Spirit, the whisperings of the Spirit, the commands of the Spirit, the assistance of the Spirit, the witness of the spirit; and from the glory of Heaven, the Excellency of grace, the beauty of holiness, the worth of the soul, and the violence or bitterness and evil of sin, the least sin being greater than the greatest temptation in the world."

~ Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*

By Specific Prayer

Matt 6:13 "Lead us not into temptation"

Luke 22:46 "Pray that you may not enter temptation"

Psalm 19:12-13 "Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also, keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me."

By Cultivating Fear of God

Psalm 130:3 "There is forgiveness with You that you may be feared."

Rev. 15:3-4 "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty... who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify Your name?"

Psalm 86:11 "Unite my heart to fear Your name."

By Anticipating the Return of Christ

1 John 2:28; 3:3 "Abide in Him so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at his coming... Everyone who has this hope purifies himself"

2 Peter 3:11 "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness."

Titus 2:12 "... deny ungodliness and worldly desires...looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

By Replacing Sin with Righteousness

Eph. 4:22-24

- Put off
- Renew the Mind
- Put on

Col 3:8-14

- Put them all aside
- Put on the new self
- Put on a heart of compassion...
- Put on love

Rom 13:14

- Put on the Lord Jesus Christ

By Identifying the Lies Imbedded in Temptation and Sin

Lies about Sin

Minimizing	Call you sin what the Bible calls it.
Denying	“This is not a sin”
“There will be no judgment”	Eph. 5:6 “because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (cf Col. 3)
“There will be no discipline”	Heb 12:4ff
“This pleasure is better than pleasing God.”	
“Happiness isn’t found in holiness”	
“The Spirit’s resources aren’t enough to fight this sin”	
“It won’t become a habit.”	

Lies about Yourself

- “I can handle this.”
- “I only sin when provoked.”
- “Forgetting your identity in Christ.”
- “I am entitled or deserve...”

Ask yourself:

- What was I hoping to accomplish through the sin? (heart motive)
- What did I actually accomplish?
- How did my sin affect others?

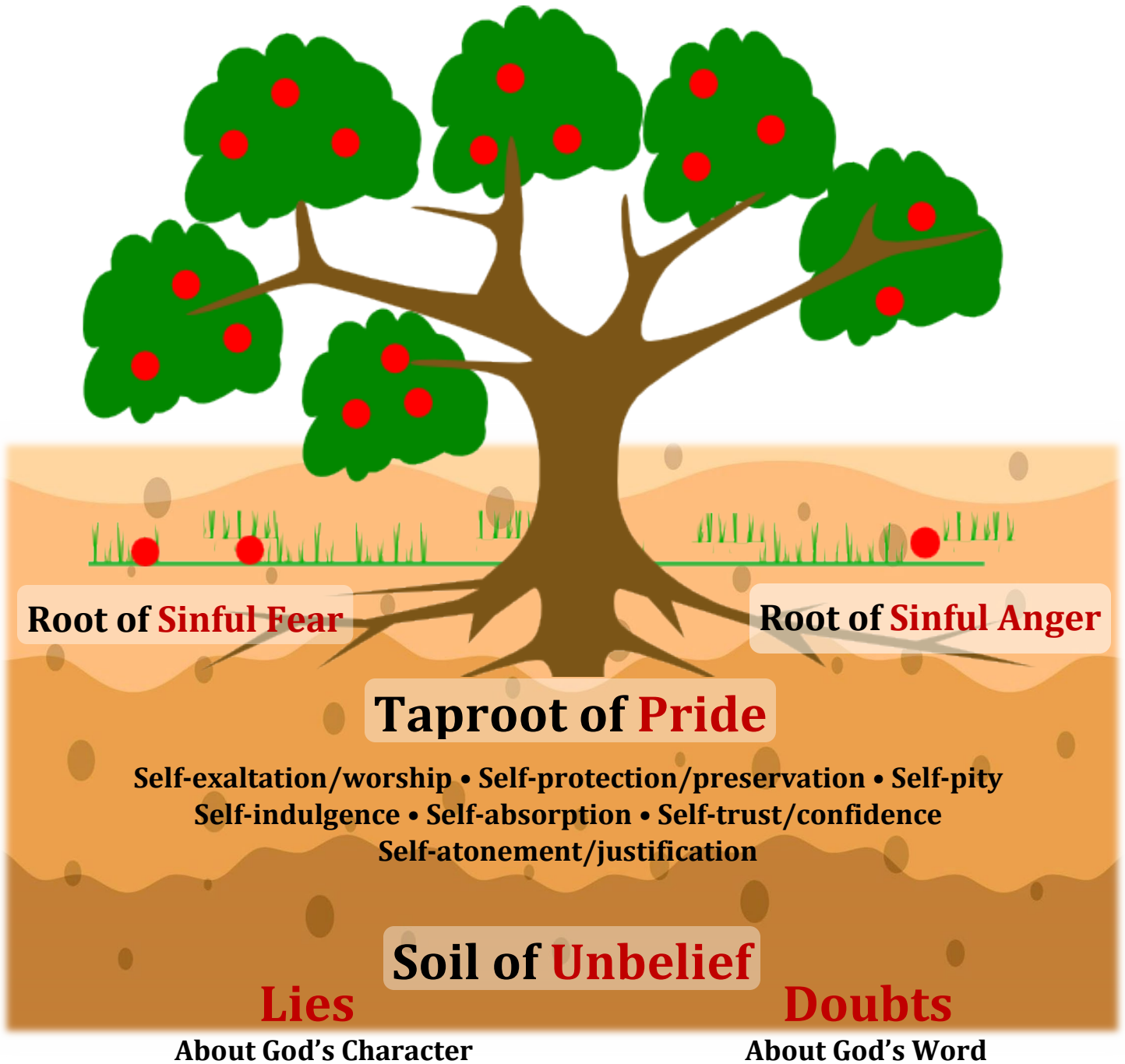
Lies about the Lord

“He won’t judge”	leads to highhanded rebellion
“He asks too much”	leads to disobedience
“There’s nothing to fear”	leads to presumption about forgiveness
“He won’t help/care”	leads to Fear/anxiety/worry

Ask yourself:

- What attribute of God would I have to doubt to participate in this sin?
- What promise of God would I have to doubt to participate in this sin?
- What warning of God would I have to doubt to participate in this sin?

Fruit of Sinful Words & Deeds



Examples

In each of the examples below, analyze the biblical scenarios of temptations & sin

- What was the visible temptation/sin in word and deed?
- What was the invisible temptation/sin in the heart? Pride, fear, or anger?
- What promise, command, or warning from God was questioned?
- What attribute of God's character was doubted or ignored?

Genesis 3	Garden of Eden
Genesis 4	Cain's murder of Abel
Genesis 20	Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech
Genesis 39	Joseph and Potiphar's Wife
Exodus 17:1-7	Israel's quarrel with Moses
Numbers 20:8-13	Moses striking the rock
Deut. 1:19ff	Israel's fear of entering the Promised Land
Joshua 7:16ff; 1 Tim 6:6ff	Materialism
1 Samuel 13:14; 18:6-9	Saul's anger at David
1 Samuel 25:1ff	David anger at Nabal
2 Samuel 11	David, Bathsheba, and Uriah
2 Samuel 12:7-15	Nathan's confrontation of David's sin with Bathsheba
Job 42:1-6	Job's Repentance
Psalms 56	David's temptation toward sinful fear
Proverbs 24	Laziness
Proverbs 5-7	Sexual immorality
Matthew 4	Christ's Temptations
Matthew 6:25-34	Jesus words on sinful worry
Mark 4:35-41	Jesus calming the sea
John 3:22ff	John the Baptist temptation toward jealousy/covetousness
Ephesians 5:1ff	Sexual immorality
1Thessalonians 4:3-7	Sexual immorality
1 Peter 2:23	Christ's sufferings

Actions Steps from *The Mortification of Sin* by John Owen

Synopsis by Tim Challies

#1. Evaluate

Evaluate whether your sin is especially serious and deep-rooted. You have heard it said that “all sin is the same,” and there is a sense in which this is true—every single sin alienates you from God. However, some sins are more serious than others because they bring more serious consequences. The most serious sins are the ones that have gone so deep that they are now habitual; your subconscious habits now lead you to sin again and again. Consider your sin. Is it manifested in your habits? Do you sin almost an auto-pilot? Is it easier to sin than to do what is right? If it is, your sin is especially deep and you will need an extra measure of God’s help to battle it and overcome it.

#2. Fill

Fill your mind and conscience with the guilt, the weight, and the evil of your sin. Sin always tries to convince you that it isn’t very serious and that it is not worth worrying about. “Come on. Others have sinned worse. This is just a little sin. You deserve this.” But God wants you to know that your sin is eternally serious and absolutely worth worrying about. You need to consider just how dangerous your sin is, how it dishonors God, how it calls upon God to discipline you, how it makes you less useful in the Lord’s work, and even how it may show that you are not saved at all. Let that sin sit heavy in your mind and soul. Never succumb to the temptation to minimize it.

#3. Load

Load your conscience with the guilt of your sin. Compare your sin to God’s law, to what he demands of you and promises you can have if only you take hold of righteousness. Feel the guilt that you have incurred. Consider how patient and kind God has been with you in allowing you to go on without striking you down for your sin. Consider all the ways he has been gracious to you. Look to the gospel, not for forgiveness yet, but for the ultimate picture of the cost of your sin. See Christ suffering for your sin and don’t turn away your gaze. Feel all of that. Feel the weight, the guilt of it.

#4. Long

Long for deliverance from the sin. Now you are in the right frame of heart and frame of mind to desire deliverance from that sin. When you know and feel the weight of your sin, you will want to put that sin to death for the best reasons. You will no longer hate that sin merely out of fear of consequences or fear of shame or embarrassment. Now you will rightly see the cost and guilt of your sin, and you will long to be delivered from it so God can be glorified in you. Long for it. Pant for it. Cry out for it.

#5. Consider

Consider how this sin is amplified by your nature or constitution. You need to consider whether there is something in your makeup that makes you especially prone to this sin. Some people come from whole families of alcoholics and it may be that there is some kind of predisposition to addiction within them. Or perhaps you were sinned against earlier in life and the sins that were committed against you seem to make you especially prone to a sin of your own. Though these things may be true, you cannot allow them to excuse your sin. Instead, allow them to further convince you of your weakness and your desperate need for God's strength. Being predisposed toward a certain sin puts the burden on you to fight even harder against it, to destroy it even more completely, and to be especially vigilant in watching out for its reappearance.

#6. Contemplate

You never commit a big sin without first sliding down a long and slippery slope of little sins.

Contemplate the occasions in which this sin breaks out and guard against them. Now think about the times when you fall into this sin. What are the occasions? What happens right before you sin? What are the habits or patterns that lead to it? Think about these things, know what you do before you actually commit the sin, and stop the downward spiral long before it gets to the point of sinning. You never commit a big sin without first sliding down a long and slippery slope of little sins. So consider those little sins, identify the patterns, and learn to stop the little sins.

#7. Battle

Battle hard against the first awakenings of that sin. Never, ever allow yourself to play with sin. Never think you will sin *this* far, but no farther. Do not toy with sin. Do not think you can control your sin and allow only so much of it. If you do that, sin will win every time. The very second you feel that sin awakening within you, slam it down with all your force and all your strength. Cry out to God in that very moment. Call for help from other Christians in that very moment. Sin is like water held back by a dam; the moment there is even a small crack in that dam, the weight of the water pushing against it will blow a hole right through it, and the entire structure will collapse.

#8. Meditate

Meditate on God to see his glory and your desperate inability. Think about God. Read his Word and meditate on it. Especially search out the glory of God and think about the massive distance between you and him. Think of how great he is and how little you know of him. Humble yourself by thinking great thoughts of God. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble; if you want his grace in battling sin, humble yourself by considering God and by meeting with God. You cannot think high thoughts of God without being overwhelmed by sorrow for your sin and your sinfulness.

#9. Expect

Expect to hear God speak peace to your soul (but do not speak it to yourself until he does). As you do all of this, expect that God will help you put your sin to death, and expect that he will give you peace. You will *feel* peace because you will *be* at peace. But here's an important thing to consider: Do not speak peace to yourself until God does. It is God who has the right to speak freedom and peace to your conscience, to your heart, to your mind. Let God speak it through his Word or through his people. When he does, listen. But do not speak it to yourself too soon or you will be deluding yourself, and will go straight back into your sin. Listen for God's affirming voice and look for success. God is for you and loves to help you put your sin to death. It is his delight