

KILLING SIN HABITS

Mortifying Our Sin with Radical Faith

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Introduction

A. Sin and the Battle (Gen. 3:1ff; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Gal. 5:16-24; Eph. 6:10-20; James 1:12-15; 4:1-3; 1 Pet. 5:8-11)

1. Sin defined
 - a. In answer to the question, “What is sin?,” we could point to 1 John 3:4 “...sin is lawlessness.”
 - b. The Westminster Shorter Catechism, “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”¹
2. Where it comes from
 - a. Secular view
 - b. Biblical view
3. Where it leads (if not addressed)
 - a. For the unbeliever, it leads to hopeless slavery (a sinful heart not changed.) (Titus 3:3)
 - b. For the believer, there can be temporary entanglement. (Heb. 12:1-2)
 - c. Without mortification and vivification, sinful entanglement becomes like clockwork. (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb.12:11; 2 Pet. 2:14)
4. Exacerbating the battle
 - a. If the person is not saved (Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3)
 - b. Misconceptions about sanctification/growth
 - Appreciate and distinguish Justification and Sanctification but do not separate them. (Gal. 2:20; 1 Tim. 4:7-9; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:28-29)
 - “But now we come to a part of the application of redemption that is a progressive work that continues throughout our earthly lives. It is also a work in which God and man cooperate each playing distinct roles...Sanctification is a progressive work of God and

¹ The ESV Study Bible expands on the confession, “Sin is anything (whether in thoughts, actions, or attitudes) that does not express or conform to the holy character of God in his moral law,” 2530.

man that makes us more and more *free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.*"
(italics mine)²

c. Counterfeits to mortification

1) Some key examples

- Asceticism
- Pietism
- Mysticism
- Quietism (and its offspring – Keswick Theology)
- Antinomianism
- Legalism
- Entire sanctification (Christian perfection)
- Etc.

2) Distinguishing factors

- If sin is not mortified
- If sin is being mortified

B. The call of God to mortify sin in our lives

1. Scriptures on mortification³

“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.” Romans 8:12–13

2. Mortification defined

*A discipline of grace whereby a Christian pursuing purity (holiness) and resting on Christ’s finished work on the Cross — **aggressively** strives against sin/the manifestations of the Flesh 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.⁴*

² Ibid.

³ Other passages on killing sin: Matt. 5:29–30; Rom. 6–8; Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 9:27; Eph. 4:22–24; Col 3:1ff; Titus 2:11–14

⁴ Taken from *Killing Sin Habits*, Stuart and Zondra Scott, p. 55.

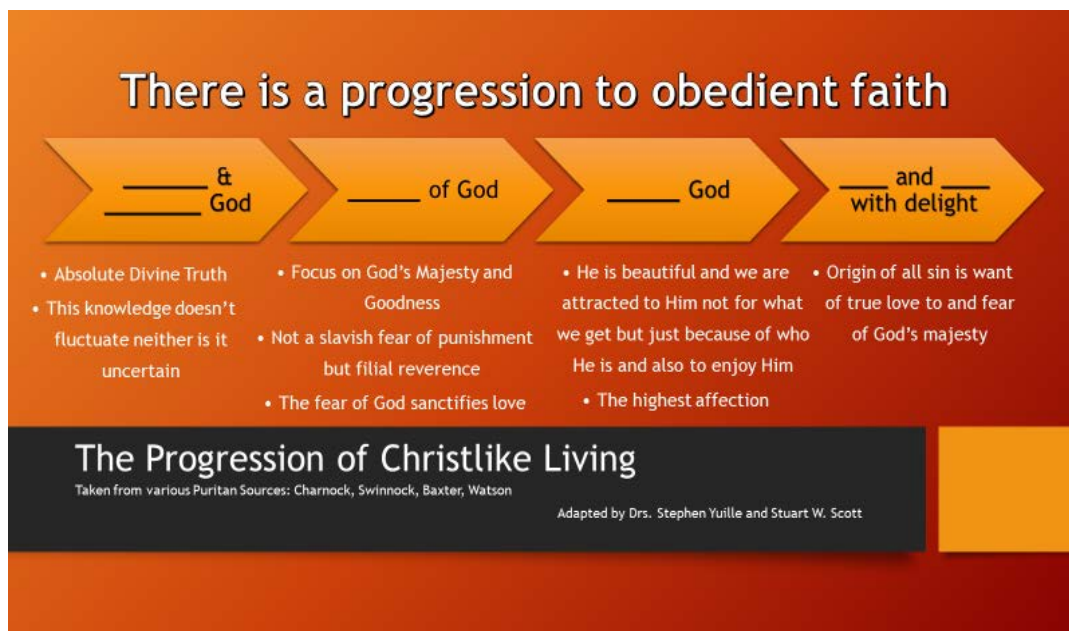
3. An indispensable need for God’s glory and our eternal good.⁵

C. It is really a call to *vivify*.

1. Vivify defined

“Vivify means to endue with life, or to quicken. It is about bringing to life or making something more effective or perhaps effective in a new way.”⁶

2. Vivification of what’s missing is critical (we are not just trying to stop a sinful habit).
3. We must vivify Christ, the Gospel and Faith in our lives (cultivating our relationship with Christ and growing in our faith).
 - a. Vivify True Worship of Christ alone — The One of surpassing value (Jer. 2:13; 2 Cor. 11:3)⁷
 - The radical love of Christ will breed radical love and worship.
 - False worship must be replaced with true worship of our God.
 - There is a progression (Know and Understand God, Fear God, Love God—leads to trust and obey with delight).



⁵ A list of over twenty ways we glorify God is found in the MacArthur Bible Commentary, 1518.

⁶ “It is not just about doing something, it is about being something or personally embracing something from the inside out — for the glory it brings to God and the eternal kind of life it brings to us.” *Killing Sin Habits*, 11.

⁷ John Calvin begins this way in his book, *The Christian Institutes*. 37–39. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.

- b. Vivify the Gospel truths of Christ daily
- The power of Christ in us
 - Other gospel realities/truths we need to habitually look to (from His forgiveness, to who we are in Christ, to our hope of Heaven)
 - All the promises and realities in God and the Gospel should have an impact on what we are doing and what we are thinking. (2 Pet. 1:3–4).⁸
- c. Vivify the exercise of our faith in trials and in the battle.
- Make active faith at crucial times (trial, temptation, and sin).
 - Choosing to be a person of faith at times of temptation will grow your faith and make a fundamental difference in your ability to resist and mortify sin.
 - Real faith in the One True God:
 - “...is the life-dominating conviction *and practice* that all God has for me through obedience *to His revealed Word* is better by far than anything Satan, *my flesh or the World*, can offer me through *my* selfishness and sin.” *The Obedience Factor*, D. Hegg, 28, adapted (words in italics are mine)
 - “Faith is the one attitude of heart that is the exact opposite of depending on ourselves.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 730
 - “Therefore, although it is true that *initial* saving faith and *initial* repentance occur only once in our lives, and when they occur, they constitute true conversion, nevertheless, the heart attitudes of repentance and faith only begin at conversion. These same attitudes *should continue throughout the course of our Christian lives*. Each day there should be heartfelt repentance for sins that we have committed, and faith in Christ to provide for our needs and to empower us to live the Christian life.” (italics mine)⁹
- d. Vivify walking in (by) the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16; Gal. 5:16). All believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. The question is how much influence does He have with His Word in our daily lives? And are we going in His direction?

⁸ Some of these realities for the believer are: Christ is the maker and Lord of all creation and the fountain of living water; I am forgiven and have an advocate; I am eternally justified and adopted through Christ’s substitutionary death; I am indwelt with all the power of the Holy Spirit in Christ, because of the Cross; By faith in Christ’s work on the cross, I died with Christ and died to the power of sin and was raised with Christ to walk in newness of life; I am set by God on a sure path of being conformed into the image of Christ, though I will stumble, I will not utterly fall; My old life has passed away and I’m a new person in Christ — becoming who I am positionally; I am united with Christ; I am bought by the Lord at a great cost; God is working all things for my eternal good and His glory; Jesus is coming back and it’s nearer now than when I first believed. — More expansion of these are on pgs. 19–26, *Killing Sin Habits*.

⁹ Grudem, 717

- Letting God’s Word dwell in you richly (Col. 3:16)
 - Pursuing Scripture-filled, Christ-centered relationships with other believers
 - Seeking to serve an ever-present Christ and His interests with thankfulness
 - Desperately depending on His power through prayer, rather than on your own strength.
- e. Vivify a focus on specific righteous alternatives to your sin (Eph. 4:22–32; Col. 3:1–17).
- Value and aggressively pursue the Christlike, corresponding characteristic to whatever you are dealing with will make an effective difference in mortifying your sin.¹⁰

D. Where the “rubber meets the road”

1. Personal hindrances
 - a. If Unsaved (Rom. 8:8; Matt. 15:8)
 - b. Laziness (Rom. 12:11; 2 Pet. 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) – God, Man, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, etc.
 - g. Misplaced priorities (Luke 10:38–42)
 - h. Misplaced love and trust (Rev. 2:4–5; Ps. 115; 135)
 - i. Bad company — 1 Cor. 15:33
 - j. Etc.
2. Specific exercise in your change to revive (vivify) faith — from little faith to great in faith.¹¹ (Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 1 Tim. 4:7–9; Titus 2:11–14)
 - a. Examine oneself periodically (but be careful).¹²

¹⁰ A helpful tool for this is Armand Tiffe’s book, *Transformed into His Likeness*.

¹¹ “Faith means confidence, trust, to hold something as true. Of course, faith must have content; there must be confidence or trust about something. To have faith in Christ unto salvation means to have confidence that He can remove the guilt of sin and grant eternal life.” *Basic Theology*, Ryrie, 326

¹² Self-judging is what the Puritan Richard Baxter and others called it (*A Christian Directory*, 901-904). A helpful warning about introspection by Martin Lloyd-Jones, “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.

- b. Slow down to meditate¹³ 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 — Jer. 2:13; Luke 7:47; Rom. 13:14; 2 Cor. 11:3; Titus 2:11–14; Rev. 2:5).¹⁴
- c. Confess your sin(s) specifically and receive His parental forgiveness (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9).
- d. Have a plan to turn from it to pursue Christlikeness.¹⁵ Repentance/faith is your lifestyle (Rom. 13:14; Eph. 4: 22–32; Col. 3:1–17) — always turning from sin and turning towards Jesus.¹⁶
- e. Be sure no provisions are made for your flesh (Rom. 13:14).
- f. Where is ‘the hedge’ low in my life where I am stepping over it?
- g. Take appropriate steps of radical amputation (Matt. 5:29–30).
- h. Surface up (through data gathering and journaling) and correct (renew) all the mind’s rationalizations for the sin and replace with biblically correct thinking (you can use the thought journal at end of this handout).
- i. Be intentional, diligent and fervent in spirit in this endeavor and seek assistance when needed (Rom. 12:11; Gal. 6:1ff). Share your area of struggle with another stronger believer (Gal. 6:1ff) —include accountability in both the put off and the put on (with emphasis on the put on by faith).
- j. Possibly develop a Battle Plan (sample, “Always be P.R.E.P.A.R.E.D. for Spiritual Battle by Continually Abiding in Christ”).¹⁷

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.” *Spiritual Depression*, 17

¹³ “Meditation” means to “think upon” or “reflect;” “to murmur, to mutter, to make sound with the mouth.” The implication is that meditation is talking to oneself. Biblical meditation involves thinking upon the Triune God and His Word and not some kind of spirituality or mysticism. Meditation exercises all the heart functions: the mind, the affections, and the volitions. May be spontaneous or planned. Joel Beeke, “Puritan Spirituality,” restoringthecore.com/wpcontent/restored/BeekeMeditation.pdf

¹⁴ *The Gospel Primer*, by Milton Vincent is a helpful tool to accomplish this perspective.

¹⁵ “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.” Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 938–939.

¹⁶ Replacement is taught throughout the Scriptures: (e.g. Ps. 1:1–2; Isa. 1:16–17; Rom. 13:14; 1 Thess. 5:21–22; Heb. 10:25; James 5:12; 1 Pet. 3:9; 3 John 11), but the most clear and complete references are Eph. 4:22–32 and Col. 3:5–17.

¹⁷ A sample of a specific battle plan can be seen in the book, *Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith*, Stuart & Zondra Scott, 71–74.

- k. Actively and specifically pursue loving others.¹⁸
3. Specific commitments to help in this sanctification process
- a. By God's grace, I will pursue knowing and understanding God more in His Word by doing this: _____.
 - b. One of my issues that I will work on by the help of the Holy Spirit, out of love for Jesus and the glory of God is: _____.
 - c. The first step in working on this issue will be: _____.
 - d. Two names of people I will seek accountability from are:
 - 1) Name: _____
 - 2) Name: _____

Conclusion

"Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Rom. 13:11–14

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:1–2

¹⁸ A Christlike selfless and enduring commitment of the redeemed heart (by faith in Christ in our thoughts, affections and choices) to intentionally care for and benefit the true needs of another person by righteous, truthful, and compassionate thoughts, words and sacrificial actions by the enablement of the Spirit and for the glory of God. Taken from *The Exemplary Husband*, Focus Publishers

Several Excellent Quotes by Various Puritans

*“True mourning for sin must flow from spiritual convictions of the evil, and vileness, and dimmable nature of sin...true mourning for sin is more for the evil that is in sin, than the evil that comes by sin; more because it dishonors 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

*“Exercise and success (in mortification and vivification) 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, *Mortification of Sin*, p. 15 (parenthesis is added to explain author’s context)*

“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, p. 291

“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

Resources

Berg, Jim. *Changed into His Image*, 2nd edition (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2006.)

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Hodges, Brian G. *Licensed to Kill: A Field Manual for Mortifying Sin* (Hudson, OH: Cruciform, 2011).

Love, Christopher. *The Mortified Christian* (Soli Deo Gloria Ministries, 2003).

Lundgaard, Kris. *The Enemy Within* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1998).

Mack, Wayne and Joshua Mack. *A Fight to the Death* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006).

Mead, Matthew. *The Almost Christian Discovered* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2007).

Owen, John. *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, edited by Kelly Kapic & Justin Taylor (Crossway, 2006).

Scott, Stuart and Zondra. *Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith*, (Focus, 2013).

Venning, Ralph. *The Sinfulness of Sin* (Horsham, PA: Banner of Truth, 1669; 1996).

Watson, Thomas. *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Horsham, PA: Banner of Truth, 1668; 1994).

Thought Renewal Worksheet

What happened?
What am I wanting, thinking and feeling? (Pick one major thought/belief/desire)
RESPONSE to and AWARENESS of God (What can I rejoice in the Lord about? How encouraging is it to your faith to know the Lord is with you in this situation?) Phil. 4:4-5
What can I PRAY and be thankful for considering this thought? (Is there anything I need to confess?) Phil. 4:6-7
What scriptures will help me with this thought/desire? Phil. 4:8
Now, what can I BE DWELLING ON about this situation that is loving (to both God and others), true, thankful, hopeful and God-glorifying in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? (The Renewed Thought is...)
What can I DO with this renewed thought (with Spirit’s help) to honor and obey the Lord and serve others with my affections, mind and actions? Phil. 4:9