

Overcoming Sin and Temptation 6 (SS)

(study in JO Vol VI, Mortification of Sin, Chapter 1-7)

We have completed our journey together through 17 chapters of JO's treatise on "The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency" of the remainders of Indwelling Sin (IS) in believers.

We did so in just 5 lessons, which obviously were done in summary form.

Congratulations for persevering in one of the most searching studies you can experience relating to the inner life of a Christian. Serious, sometimes shocking, but helpful, none the less, if you are serious about godliness and growth in your walk with God and with one another.

With all of that mountain of material casting its shadow over us, one is tempted (if not forced) to ask the Bible, what can I do about my remaining sin as I live out the balance of my days? Since I'm stuck with it until I die, do I just try to make the best of a bad situation OR is there something I could do, should do to make progress against it? Influence?

And the answer is Yes. A thousand times Yes.

And that answer is rooted in the foundational text for our study. In Owen's treatise entitled "Mortification of Sin in Believers." Turn (Rom 8) {Draw attention to shift in emphasis of the two chapters (7 & 8). Conflict, Conquer

Follow along as I read beginning in (vs 1) and I want you to notice the clear emphasis on the work of the HS.

{Read (vs 1-13)}

Consider with me the following observations that flow from this text as we lay the groundwork for our study.

1. The Duty Prescribed

"Put to death," "Mortify" (KJV) the deeds of the body. That is the mission/assignment if you will.

Now this duty begs at least two questions:

First: What does it mean to "mortify," "put to death?" {Greek word is (NEK-RO-O). We get necroses (death of cell tissue).

Put to death, regard as dead, inoperative, drain the lies from something, deprive of life.

** Point being, it is a process. Ongoing, diligent effort to drain the life and vigor from something. Rather than a final death. (Lead to that, but here in this context we should understand it as ongoing process)

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

He goes on to say, "This mortification of IS remaining in our mortal bodies, that it may not have life and power to bring forth the works or deeds of the flesh, is the constant duty of believers."

{Gal. 5:24} Those who belong to Christ have "crucified" the flesh with its passions and desires.

{Here again, let me remind you, the "death blow" to reigning sin has been struck. (Don't want to be redundant, but distinction must be held at all times in our thinking.)

Second: What are "the deeds of the body?"

Short answer – sin. Those practices that are characteristic of sin.

Associated with and carried out by the body. We understand the "deeds of the body" to be the same as "the flesh" in the "A" part of the verse. (live after the flesh, etc.)

Owen: "It is indwelling sin, the corrupted flesh or lust, that is intended."

2. To Whom is This Duty Prescribed?

You! You Christians in ??

You believers to whom "there is ?? now no condemnation." (vs. 1)

"Not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." (vs 9)

You who are the recipients of the indwelling power of Jesus Christ (vs. 10-11)

The duty belongs to you and me, and that reality forms the very thesis for the study.

Owen: "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."

3. The Promise Given – "you will live"

The promise of spiritual life. Life lived in and by the HS. May have reference to spiritual life now or that which is to come OR it may have reference to both (which I believe is the proper meaning.)

**We should understand this sequel of events in its broadest sense not to exclude eternal life the same way we understand the first one. {Live after flesh, you die. Spiritually dead, external death, second death}

Now one brief note of caution to keep your thinking on track. We have a duty and a promise. Our tendency, as fallen creatures, is to reason this way:

**A duty tied to a promise must mean that it is something I earn.

**A duty tied to a promise is a means to an end. {Spiritual life/eternal life is a gift. Not a gift if you earn it. It is God's appointed means through which we experience life, spiritual life and vigor. You live because you mortify. You mortify because you live.}

**All that we do is done in response to God's work in us!
{Must shake off the performance mentality in regards to our duties and God's promises. Never good enough. Not performance, but faithful/?? Obedience.}

4. Efficient Cause of the Mortification of Sin

"By the Spirit" "through the Spirit" Obviously referring to the HS which is demanded by the context if nothing else. Same Spirit as:
(vs 2) "Spirit of life," (vs 4) "Walk by the Spirit," (vs 5,6) "Live according to the Spirit, set your mind on the things of Spirit." Verses 9, 11

The mortification of sin is accomplished through the power of Jesus Christ working in your heart through the HS.

Owen: "Men may attempt this work on other principles, by means and advantages administered on other accounts. As they always have done and do; but, as the apostle saith, this is the work of the Spirit; by Him alone is it to be wrought, and by no other power is it to be brought about. 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."

"All other ways of mortification are vain, all helps leave us helpless; it must be done by the Spirit."

**This dynamic of the work of the HS will be a crucial part of our brief study together. As we proceed, I cannot emphasize too much how my important this is to our ongoing struggles to put to death our sins in obedience to this foundational text. (Rom 8:13)

**You must do it! {It is your duty, your charge, no escaping your responsibility.}

****But you can't do it!** {Do not possess the power and the desire by nature. It must be accomplished by power that is beyond us/alien to us.}

{“O Lord, give what you command. Command what you will.”}

Now operating from our text in (Rom. 8:13), we will organize our study under three main headings: Necessity of mortification, (next week): nature of mortification, means of mortification.

I. The Necessity of Mortification (Putting Sin to Death)

Drawing upon what we learned in our previous study on IS, (Rom 8:13) we came up with a number of reasons that putting sin to death is an absolute necessity.

First: Our spiritual life/health and vigor depend upon it!

From the ?? of “life” that we just saw in (8:13) along with the many examples from Paul’s writings, such as (Col. 3:1-17) where he directs those: 1. Who have been raised with Christ, 2. Died with Christ, 3. Lives are hidden with Christ, 4. Appear with Him in glory.

(vs. 5) To “put to death what is earthly in you.” {and to put on the new self, put on Christ!}

****We must conclude that the health of our souls depends upon this endeavor!**

Owen: “The vigor and power and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh! ... Make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; ... **** Be killing sin or it will be killing you.”**

Second: It is always there.

As long as we remain in this fallen fleshly existence, imprisoned in “this body of death” (Rom 7:24), the conflict with IS will remain as will our duty to put it to death.

Owen: “He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave off striking before the other ceases living, he does but hate his work.”

Third: It is always acting.

If sin were just there but not acting we might take a break, but (as you well know) that is not the case. Sin is always acting, always conceiving, always deceiving, seducing and tempting. There is no rest from the duty. Until we rest in the grave, asleep in Jesus, awaiting the great day of resurrection.

Owen: "When sin lets us alone we may let sin alone; but as sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet, and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still. So ought our striving against it be vigorous at all times and in all conditions." I will discharge him from the duty who can bring sin to a cessation of arms in the warfare; If it will spare him any one day in my one duty."

Fourth: We are called to holiness.

To be more and more conformed to the image of our LJC.

To be: "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (1 Cor 7:1) "Be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt 5:48)

Striving to that end requires that we put sin to death. {Plucking out eyes, cutting off hands}

Owen: "Let not that man think he ?? any progress in holiness who ?? not over the ?? of his lusts. He who does not kill sin in his way, takes no steps toward his journey's end. He who finds not opposition from it, and who sets not himself in every particular to its mortification, is at peace with it, not dying to it."

Fifth: To keep sin from its full expression.

Part of the deceitfulness of sin is to hide from us the "end game" so to speak.

We saw that in the progression of sin in (James 1:14-15), sin lures us, entices us, hides the ?? as it were, until it is conceived/birthed and then its full expression is death.

**We see that pattern with David in (2 Sam 11). Began with an innocent stroll on the roof top in the evening. A glimpse/a look/a lust/led to adultery/murder. Sword of judgement upon his household.

**Or perhaps the foolish young man that encounters the harlot in (vs 21-23). He is lured and enticed by her seductive speech. Then he follows her into the trap. Likened unto an ox to slaughter.

(vs 23) “as a bird rushes in/hastens to the snare. He does not know it will cost him his life.”

Owen: “Sin aims always at the utmost; every time it rises up to tempt or entice, might it have its ?? course, it would go out to the utmost sin in that kind! Every unclean thought or glance works ?? if it could, every jealous desire, murder, every thought of unbelief would be atheism if it grew to its head!! ...And herein lies no small shame of the deceitfulness of sin, by which it prevails to the hardening of men, and so to their ruin... It is modest, as it were, in its first motions and proposals, but having once got footing in the heart by means, it constantly makes good its ground, and presseth on to some further degrees in the same kind!!”

**There is not the best saint in the world but if he should give up this duty of mortification he would fall into as many cursed sins as ever any man did.”

Sixth: It is one of the reasons we have the HS in the first place.

(2 Pet 1:4) Tells us that we have become “partakers of the divine nature.” To what end?? “escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.”

(Gal 5:17) The flesh lusts against the Spirit sure enough, but also the Spirit against the flesh {that is its nature}.

**We have by the good mercy of God this principle/this dynamic of the operation of the HS to oppose sin, oppose its powerful desires. Then why would any rational Christian be found not engaging in this duty??

Owen: “This is the most unjust and unreasonable thing in the world. To ?? Him who fights for our eternal salvation and to let Him alone who seeks and violently attempts our everlasting ruin. The contest is for our lives and souls. Not to be daily employing the Spirit and new nature for the mortifying of sin is to neglect that excellent comfort which God has given us against our greatest enemy. It is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God who hath furnished us with a principle of doing it.”

**Perhaps this last point gives us a sense of the urgency of Paul’s directive (Eph 4:30) “Do not grieve the HS of God.” (1 Thess 5:19) “Do not quench the Spirit.”