

It's at this point that I intend to make a transition in our studies on Gospel Holiness—thus far I have painted with a large brush—we've seen the necessity, mistakes, nature, source, cause, and means—these are the broad strokes of Gospel Holiness—this morning I want to take a smaller brush—and begin to paint with smaller strokes...

Thus—everything I intend to say in the following sermons—necessarily build upon the previous sermons—the previous sermons serve as a framework or foundation to all that I purpose to say this morning, and in subsequent sermons—this is important to remember because I'm not intending to always clarify and repeat everything I've already said—this series of sermons builds upon each other and—presupposes what's been said...

I have mentioned before, there are two fundamental activities involved in our pursuit of holiness—mortification and vivification—the first is negative and concerns the putting to death the deeds of the body, while the second is positive and entails the promotion of Christian virtue or qualities—our focus this morning will be mortification...

- I. Its Basic Meaning
- II. Its Varied Imageries
- III. Its Primary Elements

#### I. Its Basic Meaning

1. Necessary to a right understanding of what mortification entails—is the clarification of what it does not entail...
2. [1] It is NOT the mortification of the flesh—here I must digress for a few minutes to remind you of certain terms...
3. The Bible uses the word "flesh" in several ways—sometimes it merely refers to the physical body—the flesh...
4. But usually, especially in the NT, the term flesh refers to man's corrupt and depraved nature in opposition to God...
5. Thus—in this sense—native man is all flesh—his entire nature is fallen, depraved, and in opposition to God...
6. Rom.8:5—"Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh...v8 those who are in the flesh cannot please God..."
7. By nature—we are "in the flesh"—we are all flesh, we are controlled by the flesh, we live according to the flesh...
8. But—in our initial or definitive sanctification—the flesh—as a ruling and reigning principle—is put to death...
9. Nowhere in Scripture—are Christians ever told to put to death the flesh—the flesh has already been put to death...
10. Gal.5:24—"Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"—this is a past act...
11. The flesh "has been crucified"—Christians are not expected to mortify the flesh—it already has been crucified...
12. It no longer reigned in the way it once did—it HAS BEEN put to death—through the merits of Christ's death...
13. This is an essential point to understand—Christian mortification is necessarily dependant upon this past fact...
14. Let me put it a little more theological—mortification is necessarily dependant upon initial or definitive sanctification...
15. Col.3:8-10—"But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

- and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him..."
16. [2] It is NOT the eradication of the flesh—that is—though the flesh no longer reigns it very much remains...
  17. Furthermore—not only does the flesh remain—it remains as flesh—that is—as fallen and depraved humanity...
  18. Here I need to remind you of the distinction between—original and actual sin—the first is the source of the second...
  19. Original sin is our fallen nature that gives birth to actual sin—both sins of thought and heart—and—word and deed...
  20. Thus—to the extent that the flesh remains, original sin remains, and it remains—unchanged and unaltered...
  21. The flesh remains evil and is the ongoing source of all sin in the Christian's life, Rom.7:18—"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells..."
  22. The flesh is ALL evil—possible of the greatest evil—and as long as it remains—it remains all and only evil...
  23. My dear Christian friend—dwelling within you and me—there remains an evil and wicked principle of sin...
  24. And—this wicked and evil principle, called the flesh, remains in every Christians until they die or Christ returns...
  25. [3] It is NOT the eradication of any particular sin—that is—it doesn't ensure that any sin will never again return...
  26. Mortification of sin is a constant process—that needs to be performed daily—and often against the same sin...
  27. I think this is where many Christians go wrong in their thinking—for example, let's liken our souls to a garden...
  28. Every day it needs tending—we have to cultivate it and we have to remove weeds—this is a constant process...
  29. Now—in the case of weeds—it's true if we pull the weed out by its roots—that particular weed is gone for good...
  30. But—this is not like sin—we pull the sin out, but soon after, maybe even the very next day—it returns again...
  31. Brethren—think about it—it would be nice, wouldn't it—if every sin we ever mortified would ceased to exist...
  32. Pride, jealousy, impure thoughts, carnal fear, impatience, laziness—once put to death they will never return...
  33. Well—that's NOT what happens it—sins such as these need daily mortification—they must be put to death daily...
  34. I personally think that the imagery of a garden works—but just keep in mind—weeds always return to the garden...
  35. Brethren—mortification is a daily activity—every day we must pull weeds, and often, the same weeds again and again...
  36. Christopher Love—"You may cut off the branches of sin, but you can never quite eradicate and pluck it up by the roots. Do what you can, sin will vex you and disturb you as long as you live in this world..."
  37. Thus—at this point I want to quickly suggest four things about mortification as largely found in Romans 8:13...
  38. [a] It's brutal, Rom.8:13—"put to death the deeds of the body"—the Gk word rendered "put to death" literal means—"to put to death or kill..."
  39. Now—by "deeds of the body" is meant—the actions or activities of the soul, as carried out by our physical body...
  40. Thus—at times the Bible speaks about putting to death our members—cutting off hands and gouging out eyes...
  41. But—these passages are merely figurative to illustrate the fact—that normally sin finds expression through the body...

42. Thus—by "the deeds of the body" is simply meant—"the deeds of the flesh"—the works of our remaining sin...
43. Or, to put it more simply—we are to kill sin—we are to kill the works of the flesh, or every expression of sin...
44. Gal.5:19-21—"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God..."
45. Notice—those who practice these things will not go to heaven—the reason being—the flesh has never been crucified...
46. But—to the extent that the flesh remains, not reigns, the flesh gives birth to these sins even within Christians...
47. [i] Sins against God—idolatry, sorcery, heresies—these are more directly against God and His Holy Word...
48. [ii] Sins against man—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, contentions, murders—this are more directly against our neighbor...
49. [iii] Sins of the heart—jealousies, selfish ambitions, envy—these may never be seen or even known by others...
50. [iv] Sins of the life—outbursts of wrath, drunkenness, revelries—these are seen by all and even condemned socially...
51. [b] It's continual—the verbs are present and active—thus the NAS—"if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body..."
52. Putting to death the deeds of the body—is a chronic responsibility—necessary for every Christian without exception..
53. [c] It's Spiritual—"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live..."
54. Here we find that—WE put to death sin, by or through the Spirit—He works in us to will and do according to His pleasure...
55. John Owen—"The principal efficient cause of the performance of this duty is the Spirit...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..."
56. [d] It's essential—"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live..."
57. Death and life refer to eternal death and life—those who are in the flesh and live according to the flesh—die...
58. Gal.6:8—"For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life..."

## II. Its Varied Imageries

1. Like many doctrines—the Scriptures use various imageries to illustrate a truth—to shed light upon a subject...
2. I want to suggest that the NT Scriptures—provide three additional imageries to illustrate the truth of mortification...
3. [1] Crucifixion, Lk.9:23—"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me..."
4. Following Christ is a life of self-denial and death—it demands DAILY mortification of the flesh's desire and cravings...
5. First century Christians would have especially understood—what our Savior's imagery of the cross entailed...
6. Most of us are aware—that the cross was the means of execution that included lingering pain and great agony...

7. It was an instrument of DEATH—a person carrying his cross was going to his death—he was going to die...
8. So too—the Christian life begins with the death of the old man—and continues with the death of the deeds of the flesh..
9. [2] Amputation, Mat.18:8—"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire..."
10. The specific imagery behind this passage seems to be the practice of amputating—limbs sick with various diseases...
11. In the first century—many people, especially the poor, were inflicted with various diseases that spread through the body...
12. It was possible that a specific disease may inflict the hands or feet—and thus would necessitate their amputation...
13. In other words—a person was confronted with two options—amputate a hand or foot—or else, die from the disease...
14. Thus—this imagery underscores the absolute NECESSITY of mortification—sin is a disease spreading through our bodies...
15. [3] Purification, 2Cor.7:1—"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God..."
16. Here—the imagery is rather different than before—instead of killing or amputating—Paul speaks about purifying...
17. Now—there are several other texts that use this imagery—for example, 1Jn.3:3—"Everyone who has this hope, purifies himself, just as He is pure..."
18. The imagery that Paul here uses—is of course borrowed from the OC practice of purification from ceremonial filth...
19. For example, if a leper was healed of his leprosy—he would have to wash in water before he could return to the nation...
20. Paul speaks about "cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit"—that is—moral leprosy remains in us all...
21. This moral filth infects both our "flesh and spirit"—that is—the inward and outward man—the soul and body...
22. In other words—Paul is exhorting us to purify ourselves from inward sins of the heart and outwards sins of life...

### III. Its Primary Elements

#### A. Lamentation

1. Now—before I come to suggest these three primary elements of mortification—let me remind you—all three are necessarily dependent upon the present ministry of the Holy Spirit...
2. Remember Romans 8:13—all that mortification entails—is accomplished by the powerful, present work of the Spirit...
3. Thus—one of the first things the Spirit does in enabling us to mortify sin—He works repentance within us...
4. And—if you recall—godly sorrow and hated for sin—are essential elements of true and evangelical repentance...
5. Simply put—necessary to any true mortification of sin is a right understanding of the wicked nature of sin...
6. This is implied in the very word itself—"mortify the deeds of the body"—put to death the deeds of the body...
7. Nobody will ever kill something—until they hate it or are deeply afraid of it—it must be viewed as an enemy...
8. Now—I don't think Scripture ever tells us to hate anything except sin, Ps.97:10—"You who love the LORD, hate evil..."

9. Thus—the Spirit of God continually shows us the true nature of sin—by bringing that sin—to the law and gospel...
10. [1] Mount Sinai—that is—we need to bring those sins we desire to mortify—to the blazing purity of God's holy law...
11. My friends the primary reason why—we are able to look upon sin lightly—is because we have lost sight of what it is...
12. What is sin—but the violation of God's holy law—it's a personal attack and affront to the very person of God...
13. Thus—as we bring our sin to the law—we are enabled to see the heinous nature of sin—the sinfulness of sin...
14. John Owen—"This is the proper work of the law, to discover sin in the guilt of it, to awake and humble the soul for it, to be a glass to represent sin in its colours..."
15. Rom.7:13—"sin through the law became exceedingly sinful"—that is—the law shows us the sinfulness of sin...
16. My friends—I don't think we really know what sin really deserves—every sin deserves the eternal wrath of God...
17. Thus—one essential element of gospel mortification—is to feel in our soul what sin ultimately and justly deserves...
18. Col.3:5-7—"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them..."
19. [2] Mount Calvary—here I mean—we need to bring those sins to the cross—so that we can see what our sins have caused...
20. I've mentioned this before, but it deserves repeating—the true nature of sin is best seen at the cross of Christ...
21. For here we behold what God did to His own Son—here we learn sin is that serious that it demanded the cross...
22. John Owen—"Bring your lust to the gospel—not for relief, but for farther conviction of its guilt; look on Him whom you have pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to your soul, 'What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on? Is this the return I make to the Father for his love, to the Son for his blood, to the Holy Ghost for his grace'..."
23. Isaac Watts (186)—"When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride..."

## B. Starvation

1. Necessary to any true mortification of sin is the starvation of the flesh—that is—the refusal to feed or nourish it...
2. Now—I want to be a little simplistic here—and suggest that fundamentally this starvation entails two things...
3. [1] Remove from the soul all that feeds or tempts the flesh—that is—all that would entice or excite the flesh...
4. Rom.13:14—"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (Gal.6:8)..."
5. How—foolish would an army be to provide ammunition for their enemies—but this is precisely what we do...
6. Paul exhorts us—"make no provision for the flesh"—don't put before it anything that would tempt or entice it...
7. If our flesh is a fire, then we need to remove from it all that would feel the flames—all that would stoke the fire...
8. This includes what we watch—what we listen to—who we associate with—what we read—and where we go...
9. [2] Feed and fill the soul with gospel meat and drink—the best way to starve the flesh is to FEED the soul...

10. Now this is something that John Owen really stresses in his famous treatise entitled—On the Mortification of Sin...
11. Necessary for the starvation of the flesh—is stuffing the soul full of Christ and Gospel principles and motives...
12. Rom.6:11-12—"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts (Gal.5:16)..."
13. [a] What we're to do, v12—"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts..."
14. Do let sin reign—that is—fight it—oppose and resist it—or, IOW—we are to put to death the deeds of the body...
15. [b] How we're to do it, v11—"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord..."
16. Paul exhorts us to "reckon"—that is—understand or consider—two things—we are dead to sin, and alive to God—all in Christ...
17. Those who are made one with Christ—partake of His death and resurrection—we die and we rise with Him...
18. Now—this is important to remember—just as the flesh was originally crucified by union with Christ—so the deeds of the flesh are crucified by our union with Christ...
19. That means—as we contemplate all that we are and have IN CHRIST—this strengthens and fortifies the soul...

### C. Opposition

1. By opposition I mean—we must OPPOSE or RESIST every motion to sin—we must not give into temptation...
2. [1] Be watchful and address sin quickly—throughout the NT, we find repeated exhortations to be alert and watchful...
3. Matt.26:41—"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation" 2Tim.4:5—"Be watchful in all things" 1Pet.4:7—"Be serious and watchful in your prayers"...
4. My friends—I think we so easily forget that we are presently at war—we are presently behind enemy lines...
5. [2] Apply relevant texts to specific sins—Paul refers to the word of God as the sword of the Spirit (Eph.6:17)...
6. That is—it's through the word of God, blessed and owned by the Spirit of God, the deeds of the body are killed...
7. Now—there is a sense in which we need to read the whole Bible, and pray that the Spirit would apply it as a sword...
8. But—here I want to suggest that we need to apply certain texts to certain temptations, in order to mortify them...
9. For example—think of a doctor—he has various medicines that he uses to remedy various forms of sickness...
10. He doesn't use one medicine for every sickness—but he specifically uses certain medicines for certain sicknesses...
11. So too—we need to view the word of God as a collection of medicines—together able to heal every sickness...
12. For example—for the sin of carnal worry or fear, apply Matt.6:2—"Which of you by worrying can an one single hour to his life..."
13. For the sin of impurity, 1Cor.6:19—"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you..."
14. For the sin of pride, 1Cor.4:7—"For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive..."
15. For the sin of doubt and unbelief, Num.23:19—"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind..."

16. Now—this goes back to something that I've mentioned before—and that is the work of the Spirit is mysterious...
17. How the Spirit takes the word—applies to the area of sickness (or a particular sin)—mortifying it—is mysterious...
18. Ps.119:11—"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You"—there is a direct connection between the power of the word and not sinning...
19. [3] Pray to God for guidance and grace, Matt.6:13—"do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one..."
20. We must remember—we can only put to death sin—by the Spirit—by His powerful guidance and assistance...
21. Gal.5:16-18—"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law..."
22. The phrase—"so that you do not do the things that you wish"—can mean one of the two things—(a) it can mean the flesh hinders us from doing good, or else, (b) the Spirit hinders us from dosing evil—from fulfilling the lust of the flesh...
23. What does it mean to—"walk in the Spirit"—but to trust the Spirit, depend upon the Spirit, pray for the Spirit...