

Mortification of Sin

Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training

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Introduction:

Sanctification has two elements in the life of the believer: death and resurrection. One is positive, where the Christian is raised to walk in newness of life; the other is negative, where the Christian, has died to sin. Mortification deals with this second element, in which the believer, through the power of the Holy Spirit, seeks to put to death the remains of sin in his life. Paul wrote: “*For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*”¹¹ *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*¹² *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts”* (Romans 6:10-13). Mortification demands of us that we see the seriousness of sin and, thus, seek to put to death every last bastion of it from our lives. “*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”* (Romans 8:13 KJV).

Our chief motivation for mortification is our love for God and desire for communion with Him.

For this study we will summarize each of the chapters from John Owen’s treatise on *The Mortification of Sin*. Owen wrote concerning the reason for his discourse (from the Banner of Truth abridged edition): “My primary reason is the obvious difficulty that most professing Christians have in dealing with the temptations that surround them. These arise in great measure from the fact that at this time they are both at peace in the world and divided among themselves. So important is this issue to me that I will be pleased if all I can do by the present work is to encourage others to press on men’s consciences the need to consider their ways, and to give believers clearer directions on how to proceed in the mortification of sin.”

Biography: John Owen was born in 1616 in Oxfordshire, England, the same year that Shakespeare died. He was born in the middle of the Puritan movement and became the greatest pastor/theologian of this period. He received his BA at 16 and his MA at 19. His thirst for knowledge was so great he often limited himself to four hours of sleep each night. He was married to Mary Rooke for 31 years, with whom he had 11 children, 10 of which died in infancy. The lone surviving daughter lived died of tuberculosis as a young adult. Owen became chaplain to Oliver Cromwell and became one of his chief advisors. He had a consuming desire for holiness, both in his own life and in the life of others. His small book, *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers* (1656) was based on university sermons that he preached every other week to the students and academic community at Oxford.

Bibliography: For this study I've sought to summarize Owen's work using both the original unabridged work as well as the various abridged versions.

Owen, John, *The Mortification of Sin* (abridged by Richard Rushing), Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2004.

Owen, John, *Sin and Temptation* (abridged by James M. Houston), Portland: Multnomah Press, 1983.

Owen, John, *The Works of John Owen, Vol. 6*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.

Chapter I – Introduction - the foundation of the whole ensuing discourse laid in Romans 8:13

Romans 8:13 – “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

A. In this text we find:

A *condition* is stated: “if”

A *subject* is denoted: “ye” (believers)

A *means* identified: “through the Spirit”

A *duty* prescribed: “mortify the deeds of the body”

A *promise* is given: “ye shall live”

B. Further expounded

1. The purpose of the condition is to express the certainty of the relationship between the cure and the result—the means and the end. There is a connection between mortifying the deeds of the body and living.

2. Believers are the subject of this mortification.

“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 cause of this duty is the Holy Spirit. All other ways of mortification are vain and leave us helpless.

4. The duty: “mortify the deeds of the body.”

a. “Body” is the same as “flesh” at the beginning of the verse
“The body, then, here is taken for that corruption and depravity of our natures whereof the body, in a great part, is the seat and instrument”

b. “deeds” = outward actions, yet the inward cause is chiefly intended

c. “mortify” – to put to death. To put to death is to take away the principle of strength, vigor, and power so that it cannot act.

Indwelling sin is compared to a person,

“A living person, called “the old man,” with his faculties, and properties, his wisdom, craft, subtlety, strength; this, says the apostle, must be killed, put to death, mortified, -- that is, have its power, life, vigour, and strength, to produce its effects, taken away by the Spirit.”

5. The promise: “life” in direct contrast with “die” at the beginning of the verse.

Chapter II – The principal assertion concerning the necessity of mortification proposed (Why the Flesh Must be Mortified) – six reasons

That 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.

Always be killing sin or it will be killing you.

Colossians 3:5 – “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”

- A. Indwelling sin always abides while we are in this world; therefore, there is always a need for it to be mortified. Sinless perfect will not occur in this life.

- B. Sin not only abides with us, it is still acting and laboring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh
 1. Sin is always acting, always conceiving, and always seducing and tempting
 2. If we are slothful, negligent, and foolish in this battle, can we expect a favorable outcome?

- C. Sin, if not continually mortified, will bring forth great, cursed, scandalous, and soul-destroying sins.
 1. Heed the warning of David’s life
 2. Sin precedes higher and higher by degrees and hardens the heart as it advances

- D. Neglect of this duty makes the inner man decay instead of renewing him
 1. Those who neglect mortification allow the inner man to perish – it withers and decays
 2. “See we not those, whom we knew humble, melting, broken-hearted Christians, tender and fearful to offend, zealous for God and all his ways, his Sabbaths and ordinances, grown, through neglect of watching unto this duty, earthly, carnal, cold, wrathful, complying with the men of the world and things of the world, to the scandal of religion and the fearful temptation of them that know them?”

- E. Our spiritual growth is our daily duty
 1. So that our inner nature should be renewed day by day. This cannot be accomplished without the daily mortification of sin.
 2. He who does not kill sin along the way is making no progress in his journey.
 3. From Banner of Truth abridged edition, p.11: “Even though there is in this generation a growing number of professors, a great noise of religion, religious duties in every corner, and preaching in abundance, there is little evidence of the fruit of true mortification.”
 4. There are two evils which accompany every unmortified professor:
 - a. First, in himself:
The root of an unmortified course is the digestion of sin without bitterness in the heart. Let a man pretend what he will, little concern over sin is a serious offence to the grace and mercy of God. There is no greater evidence of a false and rotten heart.

Having become acquainted with the doctrines of the gospel, they became weary of their spiritual duties.

b. Second, to others:

Others are hardened in their own sin by persuading themselves that they are in just as good a condition as the unmortified professor. They see their zeal for religion, but it is not accompanied with righteousness. They view their worldly and selfish lives. They see them talk spiritually but live vainly. They hear them mention communion with God, and yet they are in every way conformed to the world.

It deceives them to think that if they can just be as good as the unmortified professor it shall be well with them.

Chapter III - The Spirit our only sufficiency for the work of mortification.

He only is the great power behind it, and he works in us as He pleases

- A. In vain do men seek other remedies that are not able to heal them. Why cannot these actions truly mortify sin?
1. Because many of the ways and means used were never appointed by God for this purpose.
 2. Even if some are not neglecting the things appointed by God to lead to mortification, they may not be using them in the proper place and order. Praying, fasting, watching, meditation, and the like, certainly they have their use for the business at hand, but many consider them as the fountain and not the stream coming from the fountain.
- B. Mortification is accomplished by the Holy Spirit
1. God has promised His Spirit to us for this very work
 2. We receive mortification as a part of the blessings we receive in Christ
- C. The Holy Spirit mortifies sin in three ways:
1. By causing our hearts to abound in grace and the fruits that are contrary to the works of the flesh. As we walk in the graces of the Spirit the fruits of the Spirit restrict the fruits of the flesh.
 2. By the effective destruction of the root and habit of sin, to weaken, destroy, and take it away.
 3. He brings the cross of Christ into the heart of a sinner by faith, and gives communion with Christ in His death, and fellowship in His sufferings.
- D. The work of the Holy Spirit and our responsibility
1. He works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure
 2. The Holy Spirit preserves our liberty so that it is still and act of obedience.
- E. The endless labor of poor souls who are convinced of sin and yet not able to stand against its power
1. They try many perplexing ways to keep down sin, but being strangers to the Spirit of God, they find that it is all in vain
 2. A soul under the power of conviction from the law is pressed to fight against sin but has no strength for the battle

Chapter IV - The vigor and comfort and joy of our spiritual lives depend on our mortification.

Every unmortified sin will do two things:

- A. It will weaken the soul and rob it of its vigor
 - 1. Sin diverts the heart from the spiritual frame that is required for vigorous communion with God.
 - 2. Sin fills the thoughts with its enticements
 - 3. Sin hinders duty.
 - 4. Sin will darken the soul and deprive it of comfort and peace
- B. Mortification prunes all the graces of God and makes room for them to grow.
 - 1. If the graces of the Spirit abide in the heart where there is some neglect of mortification they begin to die and wither and decay
 - 2. Let the heart be cleansed by mortification, and the weeds of lust will be constantly and daily rooted up and there will be room for grace to thrive and flourish, and the graces that God gives will act their part and be ready for every use and purpose.

Chapter V - The principal intendment of the whole discourse proposed- What mortification is not

“Suppose a man to be a true believer, and yet finds in himself a powerful indwelling sin, leading him captive to the law of it, consuming his heart with trouble, perplexing his thoughts, weakening his soul as to duties of communion with God, disquieting him as to peace, and perhaps defiling his conscience, and exposing him to hardening through the deceitfulness of sin, -- what shall he do?”

- A. To mortify sin is not to utterly root it out and destroy it
 - 1. This is what we aim for but we will not be able to accomplish it in this life
 - 2. There will be times of wonderful success by the Spirit and grace of Christ but the utter killing and destruction of it we cannot expect in this life.
- B. Mortification is not just the changing of some outward aspects of sin.
 - 1. Mortification is not just the substitution of one sin for another sin. A person may have a different heart than he had, one which is more cunning; not a new heart, which is more holy.
 - 2. It is not just forsaking the *practice* of sin. It demands a new heart. While he may appear to be a changed man, in truth he has only covered over his corruption.
- C. Mortification is not just an improvement of our natural constitution
 - 1. Some men naturally have a different temperament than others. As they cultivate and discipline their natural frame they may appear very mortified men.
 - 2. Some may not struggle with the same sinful passions as other men and yet not consider the need for self-denial in such sins as unbelief and envy.
- D. A sin is not mortified when it is only diverted.
 - 1. A man may be aware of a lust and guard himself against a particular outbreak of it only to fall into its corruption in another way. (This is why the mere removal of the temptation is insufficient. It doesn't deal with the heart of the sin.)
 - 2. One may leave one lust only to serve another

- E. Occasional victories over sin are not mortification
There are two seasons in which a man who is fighting a particular sin may seem to have mortified it:
1. When a sin breaks out that greatly disturbs his peace, terrified his conscience, brings the dread of scandal, and clearly provokes the Lord to judgment; this may awaken and stir up the man filling him with the abhorrence of sin and send him to God to cry out for life and help against the sin. The sin shrinks and appears to lie dead before him. It lies quiet for a season, yet there is in his mind the firm resolution to do more mischief at the first opportunity and the sin is revived.
 2. In a time of great trial or calamity a person may resolve to relinquish his sin and so gain peace with God. He may resolve that he may never give place to the sin again and it may appear to be mortified. Yet the sin has not received a mortal wound.

Chapter VI - The mortification of sin in particular described (What Mortification Is)

The mortification of a lust consists in three things:

- A. The habitual weakening of a lust
1. Every lust is a depraved habit or inclination pushing the heart towards evil. Although it may seem quiet for a season, we should consider the lust that we seek to mortify a strong and deeply rooted habitual inclination.
 2. We have to understand the nature of lust
 - a. A particular lust may be stronger in one man than another.
 - b. Opportunity enflames the strength of a lust.
 - c. Satan has thousands of ways to support a lust so that it grows violent and impetuous above other lusts. Lust gets its strength through temptation.
 - d. The strength of the lust darkens the mind so that the knowledge that once might have resisted the lust now exerts no power over the will so that the lust finds freedom to express itself.
 - e. Some lusts are more obvious than others. Paul distinguishes sexual immorality from other sins.
 3. The first thing in mortification is the weakening of the habit of sin so that it shall not rise up and provoke with the same earnestness and frequency as it naturally has the tendency to do. This is called "crucifying the flesh" with its passions and desires.
- B. A constant fight and contention against sin
1. We need to recognize the enemy we are dealing with and resolve that it is to be destroyed by all means possible. We must recognize the plague and enemy that we carry in our own hearts.
 2. We need to be intimately acquainted with the ways, wiles, methods, advantages, and occasions which give lust its success. This is how men deal with their enemies. We are to recognize the occasions, pleas, disguises, and excuses of indwelling sin.
 3. We need to continue to attack our lusts daily with the spiritual weapons that are most detrimental to it.

- C. A degree of success in the battle
1. Frequent success against any lust strengthens us and gives the evidence of mortification. By success we mean full victory over it and pursuing it for a complete conquest.
 2. When the heart recognizes sin and temptation it must immediately bring the sin to the Law of God and the love of Christ, condemn it, and execute it to the uttermost.
 3. When a man comes to this state and condition, his lust is weakened at the root and principle. Sin's activity and actions become fewer and weaker than before. We must implant and promote those graces that stand in direct opposition to the lust. For example, by the implanting and growth of humility, pride is weakened. Passion is weakened by patience. Uncleaness is weakened by purity of mind and conscience.
 4. Our victory will be further realized as the new man immediately springs to action against lust the moment it appears. We must use every weapon available to conquer it.

Chapter VII - General rules, without which no lust will be mortified –

Rule 1: Only believers can mortify sin

- A. An unregenerate man may do something like mortification.
1. He may be troubled by the guilt of sin. He may be brought to a state of concern from preaching.
 2. He may set himself against a particular lust.
 3. He may labor in penance and vows, yet he will never attain mortification.
 4. There is no death of sin without the death of Christ. God calls us first to conversion and then to mortification.
- B. The Holy Spirit alone can truly mortify sin. All other means without Him are empty and vain.
1. The mind and soul are diverted from that which is most important – his conversion
 2. Although good in its proper place, it can bring false peace to the conscience of the unregenerate. He is apt to conclude that his condition is good as he is hardened in self-righteousness.
 3. After following such a course of self-deception only to discover that his sin is not mortified or that he has just exchanged one sin for another, he begins to believe that victory over sin is impossible.
- C. Pastors must plead with men about their sin but they must direct them to the discovery of their state and condition of their heart
1. They must drive attention to conviction of the heart, not just particular sins
 2. They must not call men to mortification, but to believing. Vows and the like to mortify sin apart from saving grace only tend to make the sinner more impetuous and reckless. Mortification without conversion only makes men more self-justified hypocrites and not Christians.

Chapter VIII – General rules, without which no lust will be mortified –

Rule 2: *Without sincerity and diligence in a universality of obedience, there is no mortification of any one perplexing lust to be obtained.*

- A. Suppose a man finds a particular lust to be powerful and has taken him captive.
1. He sets himself it, prays against it, groans under it and sighs to be delivered
 2. In the meantime he is negligent in other duties: communion with God, reading, prayer, meditation, and in other ways he is loose. He will not be able to gain control over the other troubling lust.
- B. Reasons why the labor of mortification while neglecting the basic duties that promote our spirituality is laboring in vain:
1. This endeavor for mortification has a bad foundation
 - a. We must hate all sin and not just that which troubles us. Love for Christ, because He went to the cross, and hate for sin that sent Him there, is the solid foundation for true spiritual mortification.
 - b. We must hate sin as sin, and every evil way that grieves and disquiets the Spirit of God, not just the sin that upsets your soul.
 2. Maybe God has allowed this troubling lust to have power over you to draw your attention to other failures and your lukewarmness in walking before Him.
 - a. Lust is subtle, cunning and crafty that it seduces, entices, fights, and rebels. While a man keeps a diligent watch over his heart, lust withers and dies in it.
 - b. God often suffers a particular lust to chasten our other negligences. As with wicked men, God gives them up to one sin as the judgment of another. He may leave them in one trouble to cure another evil.
 3. He who truly seeks to mortify any disquieting lust must be equally diligent in all parts of obedience. If we do not seek to obey in every area of our lives, our soul becomes weak. If we seek only to have victory over the sin that troubles us, and do not consider the filth and guilt of it, we are selfish and offer a constant provocation to God.

Chapter IX - Consider the six dangerous symptoms of any lust

- A. Firm establishment over a long period of time and settlement as a habitual practice
1. When a lust has remained a long time in the heart, corrupting, festering, and poisoning it will make a deep imprint upon the soul. It will grow so familiar to your mind and conscience that they are not disturbed at its presence.
 2. How will such a person be able to distinguish between the long abode of an unmortified lust and the dominion of sin (which cannot happen to a regenerate person).
- B. Another dangerous symptom is when the heart pleads to be thought in a good state, yet all the while allows the continuance of a lust without any attempt at its mortification.

1. When a perplexing thought of sin comes, instead of applying himself to the destruction of it, he searches his heart to find some good thought, some good experience with God, and call them to mind even though the sin or lust continues to abide in the heart.
To satisfy the conscience when your heart is convicted of sin is a desperate device of the heart that is in love with sin.
 2. This deceit is also carried on by one who applies grace and mercy to a sin they are not seeking to mortify. This is a sign of a heart greatly entangled with the love of sin. Its like saying, "In all other things I will walk with God, but in this thing, God be merciful to me."
- C. A third dangerous symptom is when sin frequently succeeds in obtaining the consent of the will.
1. When the will finds delight in a sin, even though it is not outwardly performed, the temptation is successful. If a lust frequently succeeds in this way, it is a very bad sign. The man may be unregenerate.
 2. The responsibility of such a sin is the same whether it is due to a choice of the will or to spiritual negligence since spiritual negligence is itself a choice.
- D. A fourth dangerous symptom is when a man fights against a sin only because of the consequences or penalty of that sin.
1. This is evidence that sin has a great grip upon his will, and his heart is full of wickedness. A man who only opposes the sin in his heart for fear of shame among men or eternal punishment from God would practice the sin if there were no punishment attending it.
 2. Those who belong to Christ, and are obedient to the Word of God, have the death of Christ, the love of God, the detestable nature of sin, the preciousness of communion with God, and the deep-rooted hatred of sin as sin to oppose all the workings of lust in their hearts.
 3. Legal motives alone will never be sufficient to restrain you from the strength of sin
- E. A fifth dangerous symptom is when it is probable that trouble over a sin or lust is a punishment from God.
1. God sometimes leaves His own children under the power of a particular sin or lust to convict them for former sins. (See LBC 5:5)
 2. No one would question that God deals with unregenerate men in this way but how can a saved man know if there is the chastening hand of God behind his troubled heart?
 - a. What was the state of your heart before you fell into the entanglements of the sin now troubling you?
 - b. Were you negligent in your duties?
 - c. Were you living without control or self-discipline?
 - d. Is there the guilt of any great sin lying upon you that you have not repented of?
 - e. Have you received any mercy or protection or deliverance which did not benefit you or for which you were not thankful?
 - f. Have you experienced any affliction without considering the blessings for you behind it?

- g. Have you failed to glorify God when He graciously afforded you the opportunity to do so/
 - h. Have you been conforming yourself to the world and those in it through the abounding temptations in the day in which you live?
- 3. If you have found any of those to be the case with you, awake and call upon God. You are fast asleep with a storm of anger around you.
- F. A sixth dangerous symptom is when your lust has already withstood particular dealings from God against it.
 - 1. God often in His providence meets with a man and speaks particularly of the evil of his heart.
 - 2. Sometimes in the reading of the Word, God opens a passage that cuts him to the heart, shakes him as to his present condition. More frequently, in the hearing of the Word preached, His great ordinance for conviction, and edification, God strikes with the sword of His Word at the heart of a cherished heart. This startles the sinner and makes him begin to seek mortification.
 - 3. If his lust has such a strong hold upon him that he allows his lust to stifle conviction, and if he is able to cure his wounds again, he is truly in a sad condition.
 - 4. Every warning a man receives while in this state of mind is a mercy from God. How can he despise God in these mercies by holding out against them?
- G. These six symptoms and others with them show a lust to be very dangerous, if not deadly.

Chapter X - The guilt, the danger, and the evil of sin (seeing sin for what it is)

- A. Consider the guilt of sin
 - 1. One of the deceptions of a prevailing lust is to play down its guilt saying, in effect, "It is just a little one."
 - 2. There are many ways in which sin diverts the mind from an appropriate sense of guilt.
- B. To help in fixing a right judgment of a guilt of sin in our minds, let us consider the following:
 - 1. For a believer, even though the power of sin is weakened by grace and he is not under the authority of sin as others are, the guilt which arises from unmortified sin is aggravated by the fact that he has received grace. The guilt of sinning against grace is more serious than if you did not have any grace at all.
 - 2. God delights in the beauty and excellence in the hearts of His children more than the most glorious works of other men. The outward works of fallen men are greatly mixed with sin. As God sees greater joy in a believer's graces, He also sees greater evil in the working of their lust. The outward sins into which a believer may fall are more serious than those of the unsaved because of the grace opposing them.

- C. Consider the danger of sin
1. Danger 1 – Being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin
 - a. The heart becomes insensitive to moral influence. You who at one time were very tender and would melt under the influence of the Word will become “sermon-proof” and “trial-proof.”
 - b. You who used to have great assurance of God’s love, trembling at His presence, the thought of His death, and your appearance before Him, will now have a hardness in your heart that remains unmoved by these things.
 - c. You will no longer have conviction in your soul about your sin.
 - d. You will be able to pass over spiritual duties like prayer, hearing, and reading, with your heart not the least affected by them.
 - e. Sin will be a light thing to you and you will not be much troubled by it.
 - f. This is the outcome of harboring your lust—the hardening of your heart, the searing of your conscience, the blinding of your mind, the dulling of your affections, and the deceiving of your whole soul.
 2. Danger 2 – Coming under great chastisement
 - a. Though God will not utterly cast you off for the abomination that lies in your heart, yet He will visit you with the rod.
 - b. Remember David. Is it nothing to you that God should kill your child, ruin your estate, break your bones, suffer you to be a scandal and reproach, kill you, destroy you, make you lie down in darkness? Is this nothing to you, that He might punish, ruin, and undo others because of your sin?
 3. Danger 3 – The loss of peace and strength all a man’s days.
 - a. To have peace with God and strength to walk before Him is the goal of the great promises of the covenant of grace. In these things is the life of our souls. Unmortified lust will deprive us of these blessings.
 - b. If you have ever enjoyed peace with God, if ever His terrors have made you afraid, if you have ever enjoyed strength to walk with Him, if you have ever mourned in your prayers, or if you have ever been troubled because of your weakness, then thank of the dangers that hang over your head.
 4. Danger 4 – the danger of eternal destruction
 - a. There is a connection between continuing in sin and eternal destruction. God graciously delivers some from continuing in sin so that they may not be destroyed, however, he will not deliver any from destruction that do continue in sin.
 - b. He that is so entangled and under the power of corruption has no clear evidence of participating in the grace of God. Such a one cannot claim any assurance that he is delivered from destruction.

- D. Consider the present evils that attend unmortified sin
1. It grieves the Holy Spirit
 2. The Lord Jesus Christ is wounded afresh by it. It puts Him to open shame. His new creation in the heart is wounded. His love is foiled. His adversary is gratified.
 3. It will take away a man's usefulness in his generation. His works, endeavors, his labors, will seldom receive blessing from God.

Chapter XI - A tender conscience and a watchful heart

Charge your conscience with the guilt of indwelling sin

- A. First, let us consider indwelling sin in relation to the law of God.
1. Consider the law in all its holiness, spirituality, severity, and see if you can stand before it in your corruption.
 2. Allow the guilt displayed in the holy law to speak to your conscience.
 3. Tell your conscience that it cannot be assured that you are free from the condemning power of sin while your unmortified lust dwells in your heart.
 4. The law was commissioned by God to judge sin wherever it finds it, and bring it before His throne. It should awaken and humble the soul and reveal sin in all its horrible colors.
- B. Second, let us consider sin in relation to the gospel.
1. Bring your lust to the gospel. Not for relief, but for further conviction of your guilt. Look upon Him whom you have pierced and let it trouble you.
 2. Is this how I pay back the Father for His love? Is this how I thank the Son for His blood? Is this how I respond to the Holy Spirit for His grace?
 3. We should consider all the benefits we have under the gospel
 - a. Consider the infinite patience and forbearance of God towards us.
 - b. How many times have you been at the door of being hardened by sin, and then the infinite and rich grace of God has recovered you to fellowship with Him again?
 - c. It is important now to consider all God's gracious dealings with you.
 4. Seek a constant longing and thirsting to be delivered from the power of sin
 - a. Do not let your heart be happy with your present condition, even for a moment.
 - b. Unless you long for deliverance you will not find it. Your longing heart will watch for all opportunities to gain advantage over its enemy.
- C. Consider whether the trouble that you are perplexed with is related to your particular make-up and nature
1. Does your personal constitution heighten and cherish some particular sin? A proneness to some sins may lie in the natural temper and disposition of individuals.
 - a. This is not in the least a just excuse for the guilt of your sin.
 - b. If your constitution is particularly prone to give way to a particular lust, then Satan and sin have a special advantage, and you must, with extraordinary watchfulness, care, and diligence, fight to overcome these attacks.

- c. For the mortification of any sin so rooted in the nature of a man, there is one expedient particularly suited for him
 - 2. The outward weakening and impairing of the body should not be looked upon as a good thing in and of itself. A man can have leanness of the body and leanness of soul together.
 - 3. Fasting and watching and the like should not be looked upon as things which in themselves have the ability to produce true mortification. These disciplines should be looked upon only as means by which the Holy Spirit may, and sometimes does, accomplish His own work.
- D. Consider what occasions your sin has taken advantage of to exert itself in the past, and watch carefully at such times.
 - 1. We need to watch against every breaking out of our corruptions.
 - 2. Consider what ways, what kinds of company, what opportunities, what studies, what occupations, what conditions have at any time given, or usually give, advantages to your sins, and set yourself against them.
- E. Rise mightily against the first sign of sin.
 - 1. Do not say, "Thus far I shall go and no further." If you allow one step, you till take another. It is impossible to set boundaries for sin.
 - 2. Consider what an unclean thought desires. It desire to have you immerse yourself in folly and filth.
 - 3. Ask envy what it aims at. Murder and destruction are its natural conclusion. Set yourself against it as if it had already surrounded you in wickedness.

Chapter XII - Thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God (Humility)

- A. We need to be exercised with such meditations as will fill us at all times with self-abasement and thoughts of our own vileness.
 - 1. These meditations fill us with our own vileness and strike deep at the root of indwelling sin.
 - 2. Consider these things often to abase the pride of your heart and to keep your soul humble within you.
- B. Consider often how unacquainted you really are with God
 - 1. Labor to limit your pride with these considerations:
What do you know about God? How immense he is in His nature? Can you look without terror into the abyss of eternity? Can you bear the ray of His glorious being?
 - 2. Seek to keep your heart in a continual awe of the majesty of God.
 - 3. When we consider the very being of God we find ourselves so far from the true knowledge of God that we make an idol in our mind and worship a god of our own making, and not the true God that made us.
 - 4. There are *some* truths of God that He has taught us to speak of but when we do so we do not really fully understand them.
 - a. We are taught that God is infinite, omnipotent, eternal, and omnipresent but what do we really comprehend of these things?
 - b. What shall we say of the Trinity? Is it not a mystery?

- C. We know little of God because it is by faith alone and not by actual sight that we know God while on earth.
1. Faith is the only argument of things “not seen.”
 2. Since it is by faith alone that we have true knowledge of God, we only see the back parts of His reality.
 3. Through faith we have clear sight and view of the face of God in Jesus Christ, even though our faith may be weak.
 - a. We all know enough of Him to love Him more than we do, to delight in Him and serve Him much above our current attainments.
 - b. Our darkness and weakness is no excuse for our negligence and disobedience. God’s purpose in giving any knowledge of Himself is that we may glorify Him as God.
 4. The knowledge we have of God through the revelation of Christ is exceedingly eminent and glorious.
 5. The difference between believers and unbelievers as to knowledge is not so much in the *matter* of their knowledge, as in the *manner* of their knowing. Unbelievers may be able to say more of God, His perfections, and His will, than many believers; but they do not know God as they should. Their knowledge is not spiritual and saving.
 6. Jesus Christ by His Word and Spirit reveals to His own that God is our heavenly Father and our Rewarder. He teaches us sufficiently how to obey Him now and how to know intimate fellowship with Him now and to eternity.
 7. Notwithstanding all of this, it is but a little portion we know of Him. We see only His back parts.
 - a. The purpose of all gospel revelation is not to unveil God in His essential glory that we might see Him in the fullness of who He is. The gospel only declares so much of Him as is sufficient to be the foundation of our faith, love, obedience and coming to Him.
 - b. We are dull and slow of heart to receive the things that are revealed in His Word. God uses our infirmity and weakness to keep us in continual dependence on Him for teachings and revelations of Himself out of His Word.
 - c. Will not a due apprehension of the inconceivable greatness of God, and the infinite distance in which we stand from Him, fill our souls with a holy and awful fear of Him, and keep us in a frame unsuited for the thriving and flourishing of any lust whatever.

Chapter XIII - Precautions against false peace (Wait for the verdict of God)

- A. When God stirs your heart about the guilt of your sin do not speak peace to yourself before God speaks it.
1. Without careful observation of this direction your heart will be very exposed to the deceitfulness of sin.
 2. All of God’s warnings to examine ourselves are to prevent this great evil of speaking peace to ourselves without due warrant. This is to bless ourselves without the blessing of God.

3. It is the great prerogative of God in His sovereignty to give grace to whom He pleases. In His communication of peace and joy to those in a state of grace He often acts in a way that confounds our expectations.
 4. Just as God creates peace for whom He pleases, so it is the prerogative of Christ to apply it to the conscience.
- B. There are five rules by which men may know whether God speaks to them or whether they speak to themselves.
1. Rule 1 – Men certainly speak peace to themselves when they do not view their sin with the greatest hatred imaginable.
 - a. We understand that it was our sin that pierced Christ—when consider the love, kindness, mystery, and design of the cross—if it is done according to the mind of Christ, and in the strength of the Holy Spirit, it will cause a hatred of the sin of which healing and peace are sought.
 - b. When God comes to us and speaks peace to us, He fills our soul with shame for all the ways which we have been alienated from Him.
 2. Rule 2 – Men also speak to themselves when they reason from the gracious promises of God and claim them in a purely rational and natural way.
 - a. It is possible to consider the promises of God from a purely rational position without the work of the Holy Spirit. He speaks peace to himself without considering whether it is indeed God who is speaking peace.
 - b. Since this application of the Word to our hearts seems consistent with the usual path of the Holy Spirit to heal our wounds and quieten our hearts, how shall we know when we are going alone and when it is the Holy Spirit leading us?
 - Answer 1 – If anyone is in error concerning this, God will speedily let him know it. You will quickly know your wound is not healed. Peace obtained in this way will not last long.
 - Answer 2 – This course is commonly taken without waiting. Waiting is the grace and particular action of faith which God calls us to when we are in such a condition.
 - Answer 3 – Such a course, though it may quiet the conscience, the mind, and the reasonings of the soul, it does not sweeten the heart with rest and gracious contentment.
 - Answer 4 – Worst of all, this course does not change the life. It does not heal the evil nor cure the disorder. When God speaks peace, He guides and keeps the soul so that it does not turn again to folly. When we speak peace to ourselves the heart is not taken away from the evil and so we fall into the habit of backsliding.
 3. Rule 3 – Speaking peace to ourselves can be detected by the fact that we do it superficially—it is an insignificant work. You will find your wound, before long, breaking out again.

4. Rule 4 – A person also speaks peace to himself when he is concerned about one sin, while at the same time there is another evil of no less importance lying upon his spirit, about which he has no dealings with God. Such a person cries out, “Peace,” when there is none.
 5. Rule 5 – When men speak peace to themselves it is seldom the case that God at the same time speaks humiliation to their souls. God’s peace is humbling, melting peace.
- C. When may we take the comfort of a promise as our own?
1. When God speaks the promise we may claim it. He speaks it with such irresistible power that the soul knows God is in it.
 2. But how shall we know when God speaks?
 - a. There is an instinct in faith that knows the voice of Christ when he truly speaks.
 - b. When He speaks He speaks as no man has ever spoken. He speaks with power and will make your heart burn within you.
 - c. Each one who has exercised himself to discern good and evil and is increasing in judgment, experience, and observation to recognize Christ’s voice and the operations of His Holy Spirit, is best equipped to judge for himself when God is speaking.
 - d. If the Word of the Lord does good to our soul, He is the one who speaks it. It humbles you and cleanses you.

Chapter XIV - The necessity of faith on Christ (The Work of Christ and the power of the Spirit)

The things considered so far have been in preparation for the work of mortification rather than to effect it. The direction for the work itself are only two:

- A. Direction 1 – Set your faith upon Christ for the killing of your sin
1. By faith fill your heart with a right consideration of the provision that God has made in the work of Christ for the mortification of sin.
 - a. Though you are weak and ready to faint there is enough in Jesus Christ to give you relief.
 - b. To trust in the fulness we have in Christ for our supply is an important part of our abiding in Christ.
 2. Raise up your heart in faith with an expectation of relief from Christ.
 - a. Though it seems a long time to you while you are in your trouble, yet the victory will surely come in the appointed time from Jesus Christ.
 - b. Look for it from His hand with an expectation of when and how He might do it. Has He not promised His Spirit?
 - c. Consider His mercy, tenderness, and kindness as He represents us at the right hand of God.
 - d. Consider also the faithfulness of Him who has promised. God has promised to send relief in our need.
 3. There are two advantages that always attend this expectation of help from Jesus Christ:
 - a. Advantage 1 – It engages the Lord to give a full and speedy assistance. If Christ is the fountain of our supply, He will not fail us.

- b. Advantage 2 – It encourages the heart to make diligent use of every means by which Christ may reveal Himself to the soul. If there is vigor, efficacy, and power in prayer will a man not assuredly be interested in it because of his expectation of help.
 - 4. Some further particulars:
 - a. Place your faith particularly upon the death, blood, and cross of Christ. Mortification is based particularly upon the death of Christ. In death, Christ destroyed the works of the devil and secured the Holy Spirit for us, ensuring the destruction of sin as to its reign in believers. Our being baptized into the death of Christ means our being dead to sin and having our corruptions mortified.
 - b. When you meditate upon the death of Christ keep in mind the power available to us and your desire to be conformed to Christ. Look to Him under the weight of your sin, praying, bleeding, and dying. Apply His blood to your corruptions.
- B. Direction 2 – Consider the part the Holy Spirit plays in mortification
- 1. He alone clearly and fully convinces the heart of the evil, guilt, and danger of the corruption, lust, or sin that is to be mortified. Preaching and reasoning alone cannot cause the soul to feel these truths and produce a suitable response. The Holy Spirit alone convinces the soul of its evil.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit alone reveals to us the fullness of Christ for our relief. This consideration guards the heart from false ways, and from despair.
 - 3. The Holy Spirit alone establishes the heart in the expectation of relief from Christ. This is the great sovereign means of mortification.
 - 4. The Holy Spirit alone brings the cross of Christ into our hearts with its sin killing power. By the Holy Spirit we are baptized into the death of Christ.
 - 5. The Holy Spirit is the Author and Finisher of our sanctification. He gives new supplies and influences of grace for holiness and sanctification when our resolve to resist is weakened.
 - 6. All of our soul's prayers to God in our need are supported by the Holy Spirit. From where do we find power, life, and vigor in prayer? Is it not from the Holy Spirit?