

were saved. They include things like fornication, wrath, envy, bitterness, gossip, immoral jesting, love of money, greed, drunkenness, lying, laziness, complaining, lust, etc. We are called by God to put these things to death.

THE CALL TO MORTIFICATION

1. Mortification Is an Obligation.

According to Paul, mortification of sin is an obligation for the Christian. He says that *we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh . . .* (v. 12). He never completes his sentence, but the clear implication is that we *are* debtors to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit (cf. v. 4-5). A debtor is one who owes an obligation to another. We have been made spiritually alive by the Spirit and shall some day be raised from the dead by Him (v. 9-11), therefore we are obligated to obey the Spirit, which means we must mortify the deeds of the body.

2. Mortification Is a Necessity.

Mortification is not only an obligation we have to the Spirit, it is also a personal necessity. For Paul writes that *if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die* (v. 13). If you do what comes naturally to your flesh, you will suffer eternal damnation (Gal. 6:7-8), which is another way of saying, such a person is not born again (v. 6-7). Paul continues, *but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*. You must put away sin if you expect to live eternally. This is not a contradiction of justification by faith, rather a corollary of it. A justified saint is also a regenerated saint and one who will mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. 6:1-6, 15-18).

3. Mortification Is a Process.

The verb *mortify* in the Greek is in the present tense, implying continuous action. This is not something we do once, but something we must do on a continual, daily basis. We shall be in the process of mortifying our flesh until we are glorified in heaven (1 Jn. 3:2). Although we can, and must, know victory over sin, we will always have to fight sin, and will never be able to say that we are sinless in these mortal bodies (1 Jn. 1:8).

4. Mortification Is by the Spirit.

Finally, we must observe that the only way mortification is possible is by the power of the Holy Spirit – *if ye through the Spirit do mortify . . .* You cannot put sin to death through legalism (rules), asceticism (extreme self-denial), or ritualism (ceremonies). Rather, it can only be accomplished through the Spirit, who indwells the believer. He works through the means of grace provided by God, namely, Scripture, prayer, and the local church. The Spirit instructs, encourages, convicts and guides us through the reading and study of Scripture, which is the sword of the Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Spirit teaches us how to pray. He also works through the preaching and teaching of the Word (including church discipline) within the local church.

Now we will consider some of the broader Biblical principles regarding mortification.

PRINCIPLES OF MORTIFICATION

1. Reckon Yourself Dead to Sin and

Alive to God (*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our*

Lord - Rom. 6:11). This is the most fundamental principal in overcoming sin. It requires the continual exercise of faith. The verb *reckon* means *count it so*. It is a command in the present tense, calling for continuous action. We must daily reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. This is what it means to daily take up the cross. We are not our own, we have died to ourselves and our own desires, and now live to God, since we have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection. Paul exemplifies this principle in Gal. 2:20 - *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*. This is the way of the cross.

2. Yield Yourself to God (*. . . yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God* - Rom. 6:13; *. . . that you present your bodies a living sacrifice . . . unto God* Rom. 12:1). This is closely tied to the first principle. If we are indeed dead to ourselves and alive to God, we must joyfully submit our minds and hearts to the will of God in absolutely everything, without exception. We do this through sincere, humble prayer – *not my will, but thine be done*. We submit ourselves first to His revealed will, that is, all His commandments as revealed in Scripture. We also submit to His hidden will, that is, the events of life, trials and blessings, that make up His providential, hidden plan. It is impossible to overcome sin in our lives if we are not, in our hearts, sincerely submitted to God's absolute authority over us.

THE MORTIFICATION OF SIN

By Dean Good

When we are born again through faith in Christ, we are forgiven for all of our sins, past, present, and future. But, though we are justified on the basis of Christ's righteousness, yet we still sin and are prone to disobey our heavenly Father. In fact, our new birth is the beginning of a life-long battle with sin. For this reason, Paul, in Romans, calls us to *mortify the deeds of the body*. The English word *mortify* translates a Greek word meaning *to put to death* or *to kill*.

Paul wrote in Rom. 8:12-13: ***Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 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.*** We will here consider four observations regarding Paul's call to mortification. But first, let us note what it is we are to put to death. The *deeds of the body* are works that naturally proceed from our fallen human nature. Paul calls them the *works of the flesh* in Gal. 5:19-21, where he enumerates some of them. In Eph. 4:22, he calls us to *put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*. The *deeds of the body* are words, actions, thoughts, and attitudes that characterized our lives before we

3. Renew Your Mind (*And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . . Rom. 12:2*). If we will overcome sin, we must remember that all sin has its roots in our thoughts. Therefore it is our purpose to bring *into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. 10:5). This can only be accomplished through the Word of God. Our mind must not only be filled with the Word, but also governed by the Word. We need to *be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, if we will walk worthy of the Lord* (Col. 1:9-10). Renewal of the mind also includes a negative aspect of keeping out what is wicked and false. *Cease my son to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge* (Prov. 19:27).

4. Call upon the Lord (*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need* – Heb. 4:16). In regard to our conflict with sin, we are always in need of mercy and grace and therefore ought to find ourselves often in prayer before the mercy seat. But notice that every principle in this list includes an aspect of prayer. Indeed it is impossible to overcome sin without being a person of prayer. The Christian life is one of learning how to receive from God, day by day, through believing, thankful, sincere prayer, all those things that have been provided for us by Christ at the cross. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things* – Rom. 8:32; cf. John 15:7; Ps. 37:4; Prov. 10:24). Let us cry out for holiness; He has promised that we shall be heard (Matt. 5:6; 7:7-8).

5. Confess and Forsake Sin (*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* – 1 Jn. 1:9; cf. Prov. 28:13). Let us daily ask the Lord to search our hearts (Ps. 139:23-24). And when He convicts us of some false motive, some foolish word or deed or attitude, we must quickly confess it as sin before Him and ask to be forgiven for Christ's sake. Let us be quick to confess the same to any person we have offended, making restitution if required. And by the grace of God we must endeavor to forsake that sin with all our heart. Indeed, we must keep short accounts with God if we will overcome sin.

6. Flee from Temptation (*But thou, O man of God, flee these things . . . 1 Tim. 6:11; cf. 1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 2 Tim. 2:22*). We ought to run from temptation as Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39). We do this by first of all avoiding, at all costs, the places, the people, the books, the websites that cause us to stumble. We also do this by pursuing righteousness in our hearts (2 Tim. 2:22).

7. Replace Sinful Habits with Good Habits (*. . . put off . . . the old man . . . put on the new man . . . Eph. 4:22-24*). Paul expounds this principle in Eph. 4:22-32: *. . . Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth . . . Let him that stole steal no more, but rather, let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs . . .* In order to overcome a sin in our lives we need to replace it with the opposite virtue.