

“The Mortification of Sin” Pt 2

Various Scriptures

Roger Myers

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Transcriber’s Note: Roger opens and prays.

Roger: All right, I’m recording. Can you hear me now? Okay, that was one prayer. Another thing I decided to do since Jordan showed up is that I’m going to read a sobering prayer from *The Valley of Vision*; it’s called “Heart Corruption.” So if you want to bow with me, listen to these powerful words. Since Owen was a Puritan, we’re going to get into that. But just listen to this prayer before I begin to talk about the holiness of God and how to put sin to death in our lives.

“O God, may Thy Spirit speak in me, that I may speak to Thee. I have no merit; let the merit of Jesus stand for me. I am undeserving. I look to Thy tender mercy. I am full of infirmities, wants, sin; Thou art full of grace. I confess my sin, my frequent sin, my willful sin. All my powers of body and soul are defiled. A fountain of pollution is deep within my nature. There are chambers of foul images within my being. I have gone from one odious room to another, walked in a no-man’s land of dangerous imaginations, pried into the secrets of my fallen nature. I am utterly ashamed that I am what I am in myself. I have no green shoot in me or fruit, but thorns and thistles. I am a fading leaf that the wind drives away. I live bare and barren as a winter tree—unprofitable, fit to be hewn down and burnt.

“Lord, dost Thou have mercy upon me? Thou hast struck a heavy blow at my pride, at the false god of self, and I lie in pieces before Thee.

“But Thou hast given me another Master and Lord, Thy Son Jesus. And now my heart is turned toward holiness. My life speeds as an arrow from a bow toward complete obedience to Thee. Help me in all my doings to put down sin and to humble pride. Save me from the love of the world and the pride of life, from everything that is natural to fallen man, and let Christ’s nature be seen in me day by day. Grant me grace to bear Thy will without repining, and delight to be hewn and chiseled, squared or fashioned, but separated from the old rock where I have been embedded so long, and lifted from the quarry to the upper air, where I may be built in Christ forever. Amen.”

Ted Wood: Where is that? From *The Valley of Vision*?

Roger: Yes, it’s *The Valley of Vision*.

Ted: What is the title?

Roger: It’s called “Heart Corruption.” In my book it’s page 130. I thought that was pretty powerful; it’s very humbling. Okay, so--

Ted: Is everybody feeling good now?

Roger: Is everybody feeling good? *(Laughter)* Well, I have something a little on the lighter side. Jeff was at a Trump rally recently. And lo and behold, there was a little bit of a different view there. *(Laughter)* So Don, this is the part I was telling you about.

Transcriber’s Note: Don Maurer.

Roger: So I’ll have to tell you later. But anyhow, there’s a picture of you at the Trump rally; that’s all I’ll say. *(Laughter)* So if you were here last time, we kind of poked fun at Jeff because of his body building. I’m kind of an instigator behind the scenes on these things, so there’s a little jab back at Don. *(Laughter)*

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Okay, I’ve already mentioned the teaching outline for today. But we’ll talk briefly on the holiness of God, the Fall, redemption and sanctification. But then we’ll get more into the mortification of sin. And as I told some people before, and as I said to Sig, I not only sent this outline, but I also outlined all thirteen chapters of Owen’s *The Mortification of Sin* that you can have available. I don’t know how much of it I remember, and I’m not even going to go there.

But this will be largely based on a teaching series by Derek Thomas, because it makes it easier than just following Owen. It’s his teaching on chapter 8 of Romans, which you can find through Ligonier. The specific presentation is called “The Mortification of Sin.”

Does somebody with a Bible want to read Romans 8:13? That’s going to be a key passage today on the mortification of sin.

Don Rimbey: Romans 8:13.

Roger: Yes.

Don: *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*”

Roger: Thank you, Don. We went through Colossians 3:1-17 last time, and there will be some other Scriptures coming up. But this is a key passage. And of course in Romans, leading up to this, this section talks about resurrection and our sanctification, and that we died; we’re crucified and buried to sin. These things are really important as we start talking about how we are going to put sin to death in our lives.

So to review, what is holiness? Holiness, as we talked about last time, is being separate from sin. There is a level of purity. At a Bible study back in January Jeff talked about how it is really devotion, in the sense that within the Godhead there is perfect love and perfect devotion in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

David Wells said, *“Holiness in God is everything that sets Him apart from the sinful creation. And it is everything that elevates Him above it in moral splendor.”*

So again, I think our understanding of who God is and His holiness, His eternality, all of His attributes, He is perfect in all of them. I think this is a really good starting point as far as we’re going to handle our sin. You have to have a very high view of God, and to make a very big deal about sin in your life if you’re going to do anything about it.

So why be holy? It’s because we’re commanded to be holy. 1 Peter 1:14-16: *“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written: ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”*

So again, why are we to be holy? Why would we want to root out all the sin of our lives. It’s because we’re commanded to do so.

Another good passage along those lines is 1 John 2:15-17. *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever.”*

So with the review of holiness comes the Fall, and then the problem of sin. Sin entered the world through Adam. We deal with its consequences all our lives. And like I said earlier, before we turned on the recording, (and I think I have a slide coming up), positionally we’re sanctified in Christ if we are believers, right? So that means all of our

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sins are forgiven, every one. But we deal with this tension every day of sin in our lives that never goes away.

Sometimes we think, well why do I need to ask for forgiveness? Because I’m wretched every day; I’m never perfect at anything, right? I think we need to keep that in mind.

So just for Michael, here’s that list of sins for you to contemplate. (*Laughter*) If you weren’t here the last time, you can find this stuff online. It takes a little bit of time to type that all in; there is something like 100-some different sins that you can choose from; there are a lot of them. “Vain jangling,” right? (*Laughter*) Vain jangling was the one that Michael picked out. There are plenty to choose from.

Today I’m going to kind of narrow it down. CrossWalk had a little deal that I found online: “Five Sins Men Especially Struggle With.” This is something to think about as we kind of transition from the holiness of God to our sinfulness to what we are really going to do about it, because this is meant to be more of a practical application. Again, if anybody has questions, shout out any comments.

But here are the five that CrossWalk said: Anger. How many of you guys get angry with your wives, especially if you’re tired or whatever?

Sexual immorality. I don’t know about you, but we were at Myrtle Beach; I won’t say anything else. (*Laughter*) As a guy, certain things get your attention.

Greed. We live in the wealthiest country in the world, and a lot of us are doing pretty well, praise be to God. But greed is a big thing.

Sloth or laziness is another one. And of course one other thing, and I almost want to put this one at the top: pride. Pride is so much, if you’re competitive.

I used to play racquetball. I was a technical sales guy and played racquetball with this guy. He was kind of competitive, right? We were talking one time and we also lifted weights. We would get killed at racquetball by these people. But then we’d go, “Yeah, but I can bench more than they can!” (*Laughter*) We tried to find something where we could say, “Hey, I’m better than you!” And that comes through. That’s a hard one to root out of your life.

If you think about it,--and we’ll talk more about this later,--we all have some kind of besetting sins, right?, the ones that we really struggle with the most. So I don’t know whether any of these are yours, or multiples; it really doesn’t stop with this list; there are many more.

When I was reading Jerry Bridges’ book on *Respectable Sins*, you go through chapter by chapter and you think, oh, I don’t have a problem with that. The next thing you know, oh yeah, I do. And the question is, all right, what are you going to do about it?

Anyhow, let’s continue. So praise be to God that we are believers in this room, because when Owen talks about the mortification of sin, unbelievers really can’t do that. You’re only going to do this through the power of the Holy Spirit; it’s not going to happen any other way.

I’ll be walking through church. I even know people at church who may not really possess the faith. They may profess the faith; I’m not necessarily going to go down that rabbit hole. But a lot of people say, “Hey, I said the prayer,” or whatever. But where’s the fruit, right?

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The Puritans said that the opposite of mortification is vivification. You have to put off your old self and put on the new self in Christ. It’s one thing to say it; it’s another thing to actually show it.

For me personally, one of the scary things about that is especially when I think back about my father, who seemed to be going through the motions. I’m not the judge. But he got baptized late in life in a Methodist church but never talked about God. I asked him if he was going to go to services and he would say, “I’ve been there and done that,” even when he was in assisted living at a personal care center. It really makes you scratch your head and say, “Well, where’s the fruit?” Is this guy really on the straight and narrow to the Celestial City, or not? Each of us may have moments like that.

Anyhow, we do have this tension between our positional sanctification and our progressive sanctification. We are all on some progressive sanctification. I think Jeff would appreciate *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Stay on the straight and narrow path, and don’t get diverted to wherever there is trouble.

So here are a couple verses for us. From John 17: *“I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.”*

And then verses 17-19: *“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”*

That was from the High Priestly prayer. I have another comment that I’d like to make about this particular passage because I don’t think I have it in here this time. Sinclair Ferguson was giving a teaching at one of the Ligonier conferences. He talked about it and he personalized it for us. We are the disciples of Christ. You are a disciple of Christ. You are the one He loved. And that’s really a personalization for me. It really brings home how important it is that we do something about our sanctification. We are progressing, and we are putting sin to death in our lives.

So this is a little bit of a lighter tone here with Mr. Miyagi; you see that back there. *(Laughter)* You’ve got “wax on, wax off”; you’ve got “put on, put off.” *(Laughter)*

2 Corinthians 5:21: *“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”* And again we are sanctified by God. We’re in the process of being sanctified by God. Again, God is doing all the action.

I think that sometimes we forget about that. We think we’re doing it, right? A tendency in certain churches is “I’m doing this. I raised my hand. I went forward. I, I, I.” No, God is doing it; the Holy Spirit is doing it through you. You do your part; it seems as though you’re doing it. But God is the One pulling you.

“Expel the world and replace it with a growing affection for and devotion to our precious Lord and Savior.”

Ted: And that’s the problem, isn’t it?

Roger: Yes. Go ahead, Ted.

Ted: I just want to be sure that we become very real and practical about this, because this is an issue I struggle with all the time in my thinking. *(Unclear)* I mean, this becomes a challenge: anger, sexual immorality, greed, sloth, pride. Why do I still do those things?

Roger: Yeah.

Ted: Sometimes it’s a phase. I wouldn’t share it with anybody. This is embarrassing.

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Roger: Yeah, there’s no doubt.

Ted: Maybe I’m raising a question that we don’t want to discuss.

Roger: Yes, and I was hoping we’d get into that. If we don’t get through all of this today, part of this was meant for us as men to become involved and share and maybe to open up. When I was at the beach—

Ted: Tell us about the beach.

Roger: Yeah. It starts with my dad when I was twelve years old.

Ted: It was well before then; don’t give me that. *(Laughter)*

Roger: But at the beach, this is the thing; let me kind of cut ahead a little bit, because where is the real root of sin? Where does it start? It starts in the mind.

And so I see this nicely-shaped woman coming by. And my wife is sitting there on the beach reading. And what am I going to do with that? Am I going to follow her all the way across the beach and go beyond that? Or am I, in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, say no?

I’m okay to say, “That’s nice,” and then that’s it, right?

Paul Deffenbaugh: Beep! *(Laughter)*

Roger: Where is the point of sin? I don’t know. That’s why I have to ask forgiveness. *(Laughter)* Perhaps it depends on how shapely she is, right? *(Laughter)* It certainly gets your attention.

Ted: When you get older, they all look great. *(Laughter)*

Roger: I have to say that I don’t think this ever goes away. My mother was 83. She had dementia and she was in the Memory Care unit. And I think she was the only woman that wore lipstick.

And there was this guy named Bubba. He’d go in there, and he had lipstick marks all over his face. *(Laughter)* And the nurses will tell you that she was in his bed in the room. I don’t think this thing ever goes away, at whatever age.

Ted: Bishop Rodgers’ famous quote was “Sanctification is through aging and loss of testosterone.” *(Laughter)* I haven’t found that to be the case.

Roger: You haven’t found that to be the case, no.

Don Rimbey: After you lose testosterone you discover that there are other sins, too.

Ted: We’re always worried about sex, that sin.

Roger: That may soften some, right? But it doesn’t do anything about the rest of the sins.

Don: Yeah.

Roger: Go ahead.

Gary Craig: Bouncier eye cells.

Roger: Yeah, the bouncier eyes thing.

Jordan Obaker: May I say something?

Roger: Go ahead, Jordan.

Jordan: I was reading this just yesterday as I was doing my morning devotions. In Paul’s letter to Timothy—2 Timothy 1:6-7—he says: “*For this reason I remind you to fan the flame, the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of hands. For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.*”

And I was thinking about those three words. And I was thinking about how many times Paul gave lists. Why did he put those words in the list? Why those three words:

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power, love and self-control? And one of the things that I’ve kind of gotten in the habit of doing is going to a Greek lexicon to understand what the meaning of the words actually is. And for “self-control” that’s the only time that word is used in the entire New Testament. I think it’s *soberismos*. And the idea behind it is putting into action the renewal of your mind.

Roger: Yes.

Jordan: Thinking rightly. But not just thinking rightly, but putting it into action; doing it. And it’s interesting that he says that God has given us a spirit of being able to put into action the renewal of our minds.

Roger: Yes.

Jordan: So when it comes to things like this, yeah, it’s hard. But it’s one of those things where we need to continue to cling to Christ and seek the help of the Helper: to say, “I know what is right. Help me do what is right.” And I know that I still sin greatly. But I can say for myself that one of the things I’ve noticed a lot more in my life is getting more upset about sin.

Roger: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: If I still sin, I’m beating myself up about it. Why did I do that? I hate that I do that.

Roger: Yeah.

Jordan: I think that the closer we get to hating our sin, the better we can get at running to the Lord.

Roger: Yes.

Gary: The closer you get to God, the more you hate sin.

Jordan: Exactly.

Roger: Yes. Even as believers, you’re not going to make progress if you’re not in the Word and you’re not going to church. You’re just kind of going through the motions, right? We’re going to be in the process of getting killed rather than killing the sin, because you’re not really equipped, right? And we’ll get into this a little bit more here with the mortification part. You have to have a desire, as Derek Thomas said in his presentation. You have to have a desire to kill the sin. Good stuff. Thanks, Jordan.

Ted: But isn’t that the problem?

Roger: Yes.

Ted: I mean, I’ve always said that desire is the key issue. But you have that desire. Okay, make yourself some more desire, then.

Roger: Yeah.

Ted: Cheer yourself up. Put your head down. Plow ahead. Is that what we’re saying?

Jordan: No. We have to plead with God to give us the desire.

Roger: Yeah.

Ted: Yes, absolutely. But saying that the problem is that you just have to have more desire does not solve it for me.

Roger: Right.

Ted: You need help from Somebody.

Jordan: Yes. I still think that it helps that we’re talking about it right now; we’re reflecting. Go to it after this; you’ve identified a gap already. To close that gap, draw near to God.

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Michael Rush: Amen.

Jordan: And we have to trust, right? Jesus says that those who ask shall receive. Peter says that we’re to draw near to Him. I think that’s trusting Him. He’ll follow through. He tells us He will if we come to Him in trust.

Roger: Yes. Let me divert a little bit from the presentation. I’m just going to give you an example of what’s in the outline if you want a copy. So along those lines, in chapter 5, Owen says what mortification is not. In other words, this is not what putting sin to death is.

#1. *“To mortify sin is not to utterly root it out and destroy it. We will never accomplish that in this lifetime. As Ted said, you could put your nose to the grindstone and drive yourself crazy, and you’re never really going to get there. It’s not easy, right? You have to pray and cry out to the Lord. “I believe; help me in my unbelief. Help me.” That’s a big part of it.*

But then I think you get back to that tension. Owen says: *“We are complete only in Christ, not in ourselves.”* And he uses Colossians 2:10 as a reference there.

Transcriber’s Note: Colossians 2:10, NKJV. *“And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”*

Roger: #2. *Mortification is not just the changing of some outward aspects of the sin.* You know, somebody might exchange an obvious sin for a hidden one. So it doesn’t make any sense to say, “Okay, I’m doing pretty well. I didn’t watch any porn today. Meanwhile I’m beating my wife,” or something, abusing her in some way. You don’t substitute one sin for another. One may have a different heart than before, one which is more cunning. Sometimes we deceive ourselves, right? We don’t want a new heart which is more holy. You know, you just get more coddled by it.

And the awakening for me was with Bridges’ *Respectable Sins*. I knew I was sinning in a lot of these different areas. But I didn’t want to look up the definition to know that I was. You’re not going to make any progress back to that desire until you want to do it, right?

And then you have to have an awareness of it. *And another good place* to find that awareness is in the Ten Commandments. The Westminster Confession goes even deeper into the commandments, right? There are a lot of good reference tools out there.

#3. *Mortification is not just the improvement of our natural constitution.* So just as we were talking, our natural temperaments are not the same, because some people have a certain advantage. There may be someone in this room who could go to Myrtle Beach and pick your favorite spot, and walk right by and never even look up. Now that’s not me. *(Laughter)* But maybe there is somebody here who could do that.

So the last part of that chapter is that *“a sin is not mortified when it is only diverted.”* And he cites Simon Magus. *“Simon Magus left his sorceries for a while. But then he turned to covetousness and ambition.”*

A lot of this is really deep. And we won’t have time to go over it today. But again, there’s a copy of these notes. It’s nine pages; I think you might find it helpful. And it may actually make you get the book and read it in its entirety.

Sanctification: the already and the not yet. Hebrews 10:10: *“And by that”*—God the Father’s will—*“we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.”* That’s the positional part. The progressive part is Philippians 2:12-13:

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“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

That’s our part; we work it out. We don’t sit back and say, “Okay, I’ve got this. I’m not going to do anything about it.” But remember: *“It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”*

Okay, we already talked about this. There’s a lot of talk about identity today. Our identity is in Christ. As Derek Thomas said, this may be apocryphal. But Martin Luther supposedly heard from Satan. Satan knocked upon his door and asked if Martin Luther was there.

He said, “No. There’s a Man called Christ who lives here.” I thought that was pretty neat. And I think that fits as well for us today.

So there is new holiness to which we are called. And again these things go together. To be holy we have to take action. Ultimately the goal is to become like Christ.

So again R. C. would say over and over again, *“Sin is cosmic treason.”* There’s the holiness of God, and then there is sin. And it is a big deal. You have to think of every little sin as a very, very big deal. And again, like I said, we keep coming back to this tension. We’re all making progress, right? We all have a place on that scale. And we’re never really going to get there in this life. But that doesn’t mean that we don’t try. We want to do our part. If we want to do the best we can for the glory of God, we have to be about this business of putting sin to death in our lives.

Okay, so here are some things. These are a couple of quotes from Owen in chapter 9. *“Allow the guilt displayed in the holy law to speak to your conscience. Lay your sin next to the law, and let its pressure weigh heavily on your conscience. Consider the law in its wholeness. Allow the terror of the Lord as displayed in the law to affect you greatly.”* Now that’s pretty heavy-duty stuff there.

So a lot of these guys quote Thomas Chalmers, too. I think this is really good, because what we’re ultimately doing, whether you want to consider renewing your mind and jumping ahead, how you are going to deal with sin is going to start in your mind, right? You have to be about that business.

Sinclair is going to talk about it later. We’re not going to get that far, but Sinclair says that it’s two things: it’s the positive and the negative. We need to get rid of the sin. But we also need to do something in place of something. You can’t just be in a vacuum, right? So you’re going to replace it with Christ. That’s why it says: *“Pray continually,”* right? Be about this business.

Now it’s not easy, right? You get lost in the football game, or work, or whatever. It’s easy to go hours without thinking about God. But overall, our minds should be coming back to Him.

So the best way to overcome the world is not with morality, right? It’s not by self-discipline, trying to do it yourself. Christians overcome the world by seeing the beauty and excellence of Christ. They overcome the world by seeing something more attractive than the world—Christ. And here is Sinclair saying that it’s all Christ in all things.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Okay. I just want to briefly give a little bit about Owen’s life because I think it’s appropriate as a sequel to what he wrote. Owen was from the 17th century. He

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was born in 1616. He lived to be 67; he died in 1683. And his life was incredibly difficult.

He lived through the deaths of his first wife and all of his children, some who died in early childhood.

And then he was involved in the political revolution. I don't know if you know this; Ted may know this; this is kind of interesting. He was the chancellor to Thomas Cromwell. This was around the time when they beheaded Charles II. Then his brother James came back and he was a Catholic; that sort of thing. So it was a great time of unrest and bad things within England.

This is kind of interesting. For twenty years he would have seen the decapitated heads of his friends on display around the city. Yet he survived it. He was one of the most prolific writers of the 17th century as far as the Puritans go. So that's a little bit about Owen.

Again, instead of going through chapter by chapter in *The Mortification of Sin*, another source I found Charles Williams. You can find this in *Table Talk* if you want to go and read it. Again, I'll put the Power Point out there for Sig if you want to go back and look at these references.

Charles Williams in a *Table Talk* article called “Putting the Axe to the Root of Sin” said, “*According to Owen, mortification means not the mere cessation of external sinful deeds, but the deeds of the flesh and their causes from which they spring. The axe of mortification is to be chopping at the root of our sin.*”

He used the analogy of a fire. If you've ever had to put out fires as part of your business, you're not going to aim the foam or the spray at the tips of the fire; you're going to get at the base of it. So the whole idea is that you have to get to the root of the sin. That's where you want to put your efforts.

In Luke 13:3 Jesus says, “*No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*”: hence, the little fiery image that I found. “*Without genuine repentance, any profession of devotion to Christ and His gospel will not result in the eternal salvation of one's soul.*”

Again, we talked about this. All of our life is really a war or this battle, right? You're going to be pulled different ways at different times. You're going to be more vulnerable at different times.

It's like using that walking analogy. As many times as you get knocked down, you've got to get back up. You're never going to throw the towel in, right? That should be the goal; you're never, ever going to throw in the towel, no matter what sin, because there are some really difficult sins to overcome—addictions, and so forth. But the goal is to get up and keep fighting.

So this is from Derek Thomas's series on Romans 8. In the ESV it says “*put to death.*” “*Mortification*” comes from the King James Version. So again we work out our sanctification in the flesh. We're never really entirely rid of sin in our lives.

But Thomas is really good. This kind of gets to the heart of it when he talks about the mind. He had two things he said that were important as far as the mortification of sin goes. There is a mindset, and there is also the method.

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We’re going to talk about the mindset first. How did Jeff describe that one time? When he talked about it, wasn’t there a bear or some kind of carcass within him? That’s one analogy, right? And there’s another one. I kind of like that.

For indwelling sin, I think it’s alive, right? Just with our thoughts, where do these thoughts come from? You could be sitting in church, and all of a sudden you’re thinking of that girl you saw at the beach. Where does that come from? We have to be honest with ourselves about these things. But yes, where does it come from? It’s our own sinfulness.

We don’t like to talk much about the spiritual world. Are there demons? Do we really have Satan right there whispering in your ear, saying, “Hey, remember that girl back there at the beach,” or wherever it happens to be?

Michael: She must have been something else. *(Laughter)*

Roger: Oh, man! I just read something about this. It was some celebrity. No, it was my wife, Michael; it was really my wife. *(Laughter)* If you’ll listen to Michelle, it was you. *(Laughter)*

So anyhow, we have to have that desire. Again, we have to have the desire to do it; you have to have the desire. And in fact we are actually able to do it. We have to remind ourselves that we are new creatures in Christ, right? We have the power. Before we came to Christ, before we were regenerated, we couldn’t do this. But now we can.

So we can do it, right? It may seem that as many times you’ve lost in a certain area that you can’t do it. But again, you’re not going to do it yourself. You’re going to do it with God the Holy Spirit’s help. And maybe in His providence it may take you a long, long time. But again, we never throw the towel in.

So *the method*. The method to mortification gets into the actual “how do we do it” part. It sounds like a Nancy Reagan thing: Just say no to sin. Well that sounds easy, right? “Just say no to drugs.” Just say no to sin.

But how do you do that? We sort of talked about that before; it starts in your mind. It’s back to the desire, and what is the ultimate goal? We are commanded to be holy. Is a partial holiness okay? Is that good enough? Is anything less than our best good enough for God after what He has done for us?

Can we kill sin at its source? If anyone has any more comments about that, from your personal perspective—and not dealing with a particular sin—it really does start with the thought life. When those thoughts come in, I don’t think you should start a stopwatch. But there’s a certain amount of time. If you don’t deal with it, at that point it’s a thought, right? But the longer that thought is alive in your brain, it’s rooted toward some kind of act, right? So what are you going to do with that? How do you deal with it?

I think it’s just an awareness, too. When these things come in, you can’t give them a chance at all. I think you have to hit them hard.

Be accountable, right? People may be accountable if they’re addicts or something; you have to be accountable. So as brothers in Christ we can be accountable to one another here. It’s the sort of thing where I have not heard that we get together and say that a brother has a particular sin and we work with each other. If we haven’t been doing that, we could. Or if we know somebody in our lives, or maybe just in our families, too, you might have a situation.

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It’s so easy just to kind of skate along. “Okay, that will all work out.” But you know, when somebody needs our help, we come alongside and lend them a hand, even praying for them, right?

Another thing. When you look at the list of sins and what we’re to do, I think it’s easy to become a bit legalistic about it, right? I mean, you could almost be paralyzed by this. I’m going to spend all my time looking up all 120 of those sins. I’m going to see what they mean and how they apply to me. You can just imagine how much time you’re going to spend doing that. And you’re really not moving forward per se.

But it’s real; it’s easy. I think some of us have more of a tendency to be more legalistic about certain things as well. So again, there’s a danger to go there and to be legalistic.

Ted: You become legalistic when you think you’ve achieved it.

Roger: Yeah.

Ted: The Pharisees were legalistic because they felt they achieved righteousness.

Roger: Yeah. That’s a really good point, Ted, because it goes back to pride again, right? Maybe somebody here has had a problem with sexual immorality, and you’ve overcome it. And somebody else comes up with it, and you kind of look down on that person in a way. Oh, I’m not like the Pharisees; I’m not caught in that sin, right? But we all were at some point before, right? So yes, that’s a really good point.

Jordan: I’d like to mention this.

Roger: Yes.

Jordan: I see this personally. Something that I think has been helpful for me was getting into a mindset of confessing specific sins specifically. For a long time in my life I said, “O God, I sinned today; forgive me of my sin,” and that was it. But when you start confessing your sins specifically, it draws your attention to that thing that was a sin. Not just something there in general, but that thing was a sin and is not acceptable to God. And then you can start asking for help for that specific sin. That was a change of mindset for me. It was just time to consider that this was a sin.

Roger: I think it’s really important to be specific, because it’s easy just to acknowledge your sin and move on. But to actually name it, that’s good.

Jordan: And there’s a sense in which you’re almost embarrassed to say it, right? I don’t want to do that because I’m embarrassed, I’m ashamed. God knows; He already knows. So if you’re going to talk to somebody about it, it might as well be Him.

Roger: Right. Owen brings this out. What are you doing when the windows and the drapes are drawn and there is nobody around, that sort of thing?—the things you do in secret, right? You would be ashamed; you don’t want anybody to know. Yet that’s the very thing that you should be praying specifically for, right? Thanks, Jordan.

Along those lines, Thomas’s presentation talks about the Corinthians. They were with prostitutes, and whatever it was they were doing. You take Christ with you everywhere, right? Even when the doors are closed and the drapes are drawn, you’re not alone. You have Christ; Christ is with you all the time. And even that thought can be helpful in a situation when you’re being tempted, right?

Again, so much of this is in the mind. And having the discipline helps the mindset that you’re not going to do these things. And again, I really think that it’s by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that you’re going to have success.

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Now I want to ask a question. Does any sin have any right to be in my life, any sin at all? That challenges us all. What is your besetting sin, or multiple sins? And what are you doing to put them to death?

It's not an easy topic. So here's some extra stuff from a presentation Sinclair did. Actually it's from his book *In Christ Alone*. It's some of the things that we can do to substitute. These are some pretty good things, and I thought we'd find them helpful.

“True Christian living, holy and right living, requires a new affection for the Father as its dynamic. If we lose our first love, we will find ourselves in serious spiritual peril.”

And this is better. *“Sometimes we make the mistake of substituting other things for these affections. We can become active in just doing things.”* Oh, I'm involved in the choir; I'm involved in the youth group; I'm involved in whatever. Are we really measuring our spiritual growth by what we're doing to keep ourselves busy? Or are we really making progress in the things that matter?

It's not that that's not important. But if you're really in deep sin and nobody knows, that's not where you should be spending your time.

Even socially, we can divert ourselves with moral and political campaigns. We can divert ourselves to just learning, right? I admit that I love to learn. I like reading, I like apologetics. It's easy just to go down that road; I just have to read and pick up all this knowledge. But I'm not going to do anything about my sin. It's kind of like shifting to some degree, from one thing to another, right?—not really making progress. I'm reading and not really attacking things head-on.

It's also easy to mistake substituting the rules of piety for the affection of the Father. Again, this is kind of taking up what Chalmers was talking about. It's focusing on Christ and an affection for Him and what He has done for you. It's not that I'm just going to keep these rules, right? You want to keep the rules, but you have to have an affection to do that. *“Only love for Christ with all that implies can squeeze out the love of this world. And the way that we maintain the expulsive power of this affection is the same as the way we first discovered it. Only when grace is still amazing, when we return to Christ and the cross where God's love was demonstrated to us does it retain its power in us.”*

How long has it been since you've come to the Lord. You know, it's a long climb. And it's easy to lose that; we take off with ups and downs. How do we maintain that? Again, it's not easy. It's just being aware of it, and again, never giving up. But it's not us never giving up. Remember, God is working through us. I say it's us working, but God is working through us.

“Only as we retain a sense of our own profound sinfulness can we retain a sense of the righteousness of grace.” So to me, as we kind of get close to the end and wrap it up, this is a daily thing. It's almost a minute-by-minute thing if you're really going to have success. It's not easy to do. We have many distractions; it's not necessarily a straight path. We wander; it's easy to get off the path. But at the end of the day, we're commanded to do it.

A couple other quick things here that might be helpful. In an article called “Holiness is More Than Killing Sin” from “Desiring God,” Sinclair added this. He quotes Romans 15:14: *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”*

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And then he kind of brings this in from Ecclesiastes 12:1, and I thought this was really good. *“Like nails firmly fixed, given by one Shepherd,”* by our Shepherd. I thought that was pretty good. These nails are fixed. You killed them in Christ.

And then *holiness means more than the killing of sin.*” So again, as far as our sanctification goes, it’s putting on and putting off, both positive and negative. But there is no growth in holiness without both. Again, if you remove sin, you have to be filling it with the fruit of the Spirit. I didn’t talk about it that much, but that’s really what you’d be doing. You grow to be fruitful.

So *“sin is never mortified by mortification alone.”* In Matthew 12:43-45 which is listed there, if we only sweep, presenting the house clean without filling it, the devils return in greater force. Again, you put off sin and you put on the fruit of the Spirit.

“Sanctification is not merely the process of overcoming our sin. It is ultimately becoming like the Lord Jesus.” That’s our goal. *“For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.”*

That’s about all the time I have. I want to skip ahead here because I have something I gave at the men’s breakfast. This is a little visual picture we’ll take before we go. Do you see that in the back? It’s not as heavy a version of the 120 sins. But I kind of like this because if you look at it, you look at the roots. You’re too busy for the things of God. You have a disregard for God. You’re playing games, or whatever it happens to be. You have not time for prayer.

Than the trunk of the tree is pride. And then from all the branches come all these different sins. This is loosely based on Jerry Bridges’ book.

And then the opposite of that is that you’re a man in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit. You’re spending time in Scripture; you’re daily in prayer. You’re at Brave Men or wherever it is, right? And you’re obedient; we’re called to obedience, right? And the fruit of the Spirit springs from that. Anyhow, does anybody have any comments. It’s a pretty heavy and sobering topic, and not one that we really want to deal with because it’s not easy to do.

Ted: My only thought was, as we finish up, that if you would take my church on any given Sunday, at the 8:30 service, or Christ Church at Grove Farm, however many attend that early service, what percentage of those people are even thinking about this as an issue, or even want to understand the depth of it?

Roger: You know, that’s so true. We could spend another hour on the anatomy of behavior, right? That’s a whole other story. But we are there. There are two things I taught these people before. We went to a “Casting Crowns” concert at a county fair. You know, they’re a positive Christian group. My brother and sister-in-law wanted to go with me. The guy was talking. But it was almost like you might as well just play the Beatles’ “All You Need is Love.” That’s the best way to summarize it.

No, that’s not all you need! In fact, there couldn’t be anything worse. (Maybe I should turn it off; maybe not.) But you’re not getting the full gospel in a lot of these churches. You’re basically in and you don’t have to do anything. I wouldn’t say it’s antinomianism, but it’s not the full gospel. There’s no call to repentance, and putting sin to death in your life.

Just for another example, last night there was a lead speaker at a women’s retreat. There was a Christian young lady who went to church five times a week; she was a

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Baptist. And she gets pregnant once, then twice. And the second time she takes one of those abortion pills. I didn't even know they had a pill till last night; apparently they're pushing that now.

Brave Man: How does that happen?

Roger: Yeah, how does that happen? I think it's because there is just no call to holiness. It's just—

Ted: Aside from the behavior, you just entertain with this talk and leave out the content.

Roger: Yeah, right. It's offensive. My brother goes to the UCC church. He's the pianist. He got into trouble because he actually dared to read something from Billy Graham. The pastor and the people came up to him. “What you said hurt people. This is a safe place.”

Ted: Yeah. Forget the UCC. Let's just deal with all the “good” churches.

Roger: Yeah.

Ted: They all have the same problem.

Roger: Yeah; it's a problem.

Gary: Find a new church.

Roger: What's that?

Gary: Find a new church.

Roger: Yes, find a new church, absolutely.

Let me close out in prayer, and then we can talk more about it.

Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for this time and this day that You've given us. Lord, we do pray that the power of the Holy Spirit would help us all to root out sin in our lives each and every day, minute by minute. Lord, help us to renew our minds by feasting on the graces that You give us, Lord—Your word, fellowship with believers, prayer and the sacraments. Lord, we love You, we Praise You. We thank You for what You've done for us through Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)