How to Kill Sin in Your Life

1 Kings 8:38; Psalm 57:7; Psalm 119:6; Psalm 119:136; Psalm 139:22; Haggai 1:5-7; Ephesians 4:22; 1 Peter 1:22
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The question is, “How do I kill sin in my life? How do I do it?” Let me give you some little principles — very basic and straightforward.

If you live by the Spirit and are headed towards eternal life because of your salvation, the Spirit in you gives the power to be killing the deeds of the flesh.

The question is, “All right, how do I do that? I agree that the power is there, that’s the bent of my life, that’s the way I am going. I want to see the Spirit do more and more of it. How do I get to that point? How do I gain that victory? How do I establish that habitual pattern? What do I do?”

1. Recognize the Presence of Sin in Your Flesh.

Do you know why most Christians are most commonly defeated by sin? I believe it is because their sin has so totally deceived them, that they never really get to the point where they honestly evaluate its reality. They are not dealing with the issue.

They spend so much of their lives justifying their sin as a personality quirk or a product of their environment. They sugar-coat their habitual sins as simply idiosyncrasies of individuality, or some prenatal predilection that their mother had, or whatever. People can become so good at denying the reality of sin that they don’t see it. As a result, they don’t deal with it because they don’t even recognize it for what it is.

Any kind of spiritual victory begins by identifying the enemy. It is the same old story,"If you don’t know what you are shooting at, how are you going to hit it?” How am I going to eliminate from my life what I don’t even identify as needing to be eliminated?

Sin is not only wicked, it is deceitful. And it’s there inside each of us. Believe me it is there. John Owen was right; he says of sin:

It has no doors to open. It needs no engine by which to work. It lies in the mind and in the understanding. It is found in the will. It is in the inclinations of the affections. It has such intimacy in the soul.

It’s there! But inevitably it’s covered up. As the Psalmist prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me” (Psalm 139:22).We must ask God to help us see our sinfulness, if we want to recognize it for what it is.

Don't be deceived about how good you are. Believe me, your sin is there, and it is wretched and it spurts forth between the cracks of your supposed righteousness. It comes out in anger and bitter words, unkind thoughts, criticisms, self-conceit, lack of understanding, impatience, weak prayers, immoral thoughts, and even overt sins. You need to know your weaknesses.

Haggai the prophet, in chapter one of his prophecy, repeats the command, "Consider your ways! Consider your ways!" (Haggai 1:5, 7). In other words, take a good deep look at yourself. First Kings 8:38 says, "Know the plague in your own heart." And Paul in Ephesians 4:22 talks about deceitful lusts. From these and many other passages, the Bible makes the point: If you want to kill sin in your life, you must begin by examining your own heart to see the reality of what is there.

2. A Heart Fixed on God.

Second step. In order to gain this victory, its triumph, and to see the power of the Spirit of God begin to give you the power over the unredeemed flesh that you desire—that God desires—you must have a heart fixed on God. A heart fixed on God. The Psalmist said in Psalm 57:7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." What do I mean by that? Undivided devotion to God! That's that wholeness in spiritual life where I am given wholly to God. What do I mean by that? What I am really saying in this context is, you can't have sin in one area. You can't just sort of clean up a lot of it but leave it in one area. You can't starve it out and kill it in one spot and feed it so it lives in another spot. If it lives anywhere it will crawl all over everywhere. It is the most noxious, fastest growing weed in existence. It will not confine itself to one flower bed, it'll be everywhere. The psalmist said in Psalm 119, verse 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed." When? When will you not be ashamed? "When I have respect unto all thy commandments." My life isn't going to be right, my life isn't going to be without shame until I give proper respect to every command of God. And that is to deal with every issue of sin in my life. The only unashamed life is the life of one who is totally fixed on God; everything has been dealt with.

3. Meditate on the Word.

Meditate on the Word. The filling of the Spirit is equated in Colossians 3, to letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. When the Word controls you, when it controls your thinking, when it is there as the psalmist said, "To meditate on day and night," when it is there hidden that "I might not sin against God," then you have a control factor in your life. The way to kill sin in your life is to feed it Scripture. It's a poison. It'll poison sin. Just feed a sinful life Scripture—it will poison it! Whatever really controls your mind, controls your behavior; so you learn to close out the garbage and you feed the sin—the remaining sin—in your life a steady diet of God's glorious truth and it poisons sin. And so you must give yourself to the Word. You must saturate yourself in the Word. You must hear the Word preached and taught. You must learn it yourself and you must meditate on it day and night.

4. Commune with God in Prayer.

These are so very basic. Fourthly, and very important, commune with God in prayer. Commune with God in prayer. This sort of circles back around to the first point that I gave you. True prayer gives the heart a sense of its own vile character and renews the hatred of sin. True prayer does that. John Owens said, "He who pleads with God for the remission of sin also pleads with his own heart to detest it." Somewhere along the line, in your own prayer life you need to get honest. You need to get honest. And you need to begin to say to God, "I want you to reveal my sin, I want you to stir it up in

me. I want you to show it to me. I want you to blow away the dust that is covering it. I want you to peel off the things that have been hiding it away in my life, so that it becomes manifest and visible to me. I want to see the reality of my sin. I want you to show it to me just the way it is." That's part of your communion with God.

When you pray to God—that is an honest confession. You can say you confess your sins, but until you pray, "God show me all the sins of my life, reveal all of them, uncover every little corner of my life. Bring it up and may it become as detestable to me as it is to you, and may you give me the strength to see it go away." Those are the kind of prayers that are the true prayers of repentance. I have always believed that when you really confess your sins there is a little P.S. that you add to the end of it, when you say, "Lord please forgive me for that sin," and you always add, if your confession is true, "and Lord may I never do that again." That's my heart's cry. And then prayer exposes secret sins. Prayer weakens prevailing sins. Prayer finds strength in fellowship with the Holy God to kill sin in our lives.

What must I do if I am to know victory over sin? First, I have to recognize the sin in my life. Don't kid yourself, don't gloss over yourself, don't underestimate your wretched condition as Paul didn't in Romans, chapter 7. And then fix your gaze wholly on God and become totally devoted to Him, so that everything in life, center and circumference, is Him. As the psalmist said in Psalm 16, "I have set the Lord always before me," and that is the only way to live. And then it is also equally essential that you cultivate a knowledge and understanding, and a deep comprehension and application of biblical truth, and that you spend time in honest prayer before God, bringing the truth to life in His presence. And in those kinds of simple spiritual exercises comes the death of sin. Then there is a fifth and last in this little pattern of victory.

5. Cultivate Obedience.

Now we go out of that private place, where you looked for your sin and where you fixed you gaze on God. And where you meditated on the Word, and where you communed with God in prayer, and we move into the public place and now the pattern of your life is set on a course of obedience. Paul said, "I haven't attained," I love this, "but," he said, "I press towards the mark." I haven't reached the goal but I am on the path. What path was he on? The path of obedience. Peter said, "Our lives should be characterized," 1 Peter 1:22, "by obedience to the truth." And we walk a path of obedience. If you want to engage yourself with a real battle with sin, just set your course, day-by-day, moment-by-moment, one step at a time, on a path of obedience. At first it seems hard, at first the progress seems slow, but you stay with it and eventually you become habitually obedient. Habitually obedient. It becomes a habit! You stay on the path that God has laid out in His Word. That path will lead you to grow in grace, to perfect holiness, to renew the inward man day-by-day, and you'll train yourself towards godliness.

Now, it would be fair, I think, to ask a final question, and that is, "How am I doing on this?" How can I do a little inventory and say to myself, "Soul, Soul, how are you doing? How's this working out? Are you doing these things?" Just ask yourself some simple questions.

A. How's my zeal for God?

Is my heart cold towards God? Has sin made me indifferent to times of communion with Him? Do I have little or no interest in His presence? In the glory of His name? Do I love His Word? Do I love His

law? Can I understand what the psalmist meant in Psalm 119:136, when he said, “Rivers of water run down my eyes, because they keep not thy law.” Do I have such a love for God’s law that I am devastated when His law is disregarded? Do I earnestly contend for the faith? Do I live to uphold truth? To live it? To proclaim it? What level is my zeal at?

B. Do I love the Word?

Do I find myself drawn to the Word? Almost pinned to it by some divine wrestler who has me on the canvas and I can’t get up until its truths have become my own convictions. Do I find myself indulging in the deep things of the Word? Ask myself this, “Self, do you love the time of prayer? Do you love the place of confession? Do you eagerly rush into the place where you can confess your sin and ask God to do the self-examining process by the light of the Holy Spirit, so that every dirty thing can be brought to light. Do you seek that? Do you delight in worship? Is it your great longing to be here with God’s redeemed people? Is it precious to you to spend the Lord’s Day in the church? Is it your soul’s highest delight to sing His praise and know Him better, that you might offer Him honor?” Or do you say with the Jews of Malachi’s day, “What a weariness worship is!”

Ask yourself this, “Are you sensitive to sin in the church? Are you sensitive to sin in the world? Does it tear your heart up when you see sin around you any where? In your own life?”

You see those are just the basic principles I gave you, just flipped around and turned into self-examining questions. Spiritual victory is there if you recognize that you are not under any obligation to sin. If you recognize that the Spirit of God has already bent you towards life, and so He’s already killing sin in your life, and the power to kill all of it is there. Then all you need to do is tap into the means, and I gave you simple principles by which you can begin to do that in your life, and a little test by which you can examine where you are.

I don’t know about you but I want to have a life of virtue. I want to have a life of joy. I want to have a life of peace, and I want to have a life of usefulness to God—and this is the path to that life. And may God give you the strength to walk it; and may—through you walking it faithfully—God bring glory to His own name. That’s the purpose of everything.

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