

Killing Sin, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 26:41; 1 Corinthians 9:2527; Ephesians 5:18

Code: B120802

Killing sin is a constant discipline in the believer's life. Destroying and mortifying sinful habits and patterns is a lifelong battle we must wage for the sake of our spiritual growth.

Yesterday we discussed some key commands from Scripture that help us destroy the sin in our lives, such as abstaining from fleshly lusts, making no provision for the flesh, fixing our hearts on Christ, and meditating on God's Word. Today we'll look at a couple more.

Pray without ceasing. On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took His disciples with Him to Gethsemane and told them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke 22:40). Later He found them sleeping and rebuked them for their prayerlessness. He told them, "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

"Lead us not into temptation" was part of the model prayer He gave the disciples (Luke 11:4). Prayer is an effective and necessary means for heading off sinful temptations *before* they can attack. Look at prayer as a preemptive strike against fleshliness. By drawing us near to the Lord and focusing our thoughts on Him, prayer both steels us against fleshly temptation and weakens the temptations when they come.

Watch and pray. Identify the circumstances that lead you into sin and pray specifically for strength to face those situations. Pray for a holy hatred of sin. Pray that God will show you the real state of your sinful heart.

Prayer must include confession and repentance if it is to be effective in mortifying our sin. John wrote, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). And the writer of Hebrews says, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Exercise selfcontrol. Selfcontrol is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23)—and it's also one of the means through which the Spirit enables us to mortify the deeds of the body. Paul wrote,

Everyone who competes in the games exercises selfcontrol in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:2527).

Athletes discipline their bodies for mere earthly prizes. If they are willing to do that, shouldn't we also be willing to exercise a similar kind of selfcontrol for the heavenly prize? Paul is not speaking here of punishing the body through selfflagellation or neglect. He certainly is not advocating anything that

would physically weaken or injure the body.

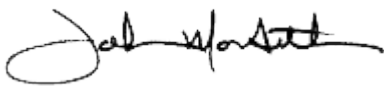
That is not at all the spirit of what Scripture calls for. It is a watchful selfdiscipline that refuses to pander to the appetites of the body at the soul's expense. Jesus said, "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and [the Day of the Lord] come on you suddenly like a trap" (Luke 21:34).

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation," Paul wrote, "but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). To be Spirit filled is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, just as to be drunk is to be under the influence of alcohol. Believers are to be utterly yielded to the Spirit's control.

In other words, as we have noted repeatedly, we cannot abandon our own responsibility and passively wait for God to mortify sin on our behalf. The Spiritfilled life is an active, vigorous, working endeavor, where we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). When we obey, we then discover it is actually God who is at work in us "both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). In other words, God both molds our wills to obey and then gives us the energy to work according to whatever pleases Him. That is the Spiritfilled life.

There are many more duties related to mortifying sin—such as clothing oneself with humility (1 Peter 5:5); having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5); putting away spiteful feelings toward others (Ephesians 4:31-32); putting on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17); laying aside sinful attitudes (Colossians 3:8-9); adding the graces of spiritual growth to one's life (2 Peter 1:57); following the *know, reckon, yield, obey, serve* pattern of Romans 6—and many similar responsibilities the New Testament assigns to believers. These may *all* be subsumed under this basic category of being filled with the Spirit.

In the end, it is really as simple as this: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). Believers can take comfort and encouragement in the knowledge that the fruit of the Spirit will overgrow and choke out the works of the flesh.



(Adapted from [*The Vanishing Conscience*](#).)

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).