

John Owen on Dealing with Sin:
Lesson 1: The Importance of Dealing with Sin
Romans 8:13

adapted from Owen's *Mortification of Sin* ch. I

Introduction: The word “mortify” means “to put to death” and is used in the KJV of Romans 8:13 and Colossians 3:5, both of which speak of dealing with sinful habits arising from our fleshly natures.

Learn the importance of dealing with your sin.

I. This exhortation is directed toward believers.

- A. Romans 8:1, 9-11 demonstrate that this passages is directed toward those who have been quickened (made alive) by the Spirit.
- B. The thesis of this study:

“The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, should also make it their business all of their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.”

II. The condition expresses the certainty of the relationship.

- A. The purpose of this condition is to express the certainty of the relationship between the cure and the result, mortifying the deeds of the body and living.
- B. There is not a strict cause and effect because “...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23) and so cannot be earned by any works or righteous acts. These are not cause and effect, but means and end.
- C. If you use this means (the mortification of the flesh) you shall that end; if you do mortify the flesh, you shall live. *This, then, is the main motive for this duty.*

III. Our strength for this duty comes through the Spirit.

- A. All other ways are empty and useless [“vain”].
- B. Mortification in self-strength, by self-invention, to the end of self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of false religion.

IV. The duty itself.

- A. The “body” = the “flesh” = indwelling sin.
- B. The actual deeds are mentioned but the inward cause is intended. The deeds are outward expressions of inward sin, which is the fountain of sinful action.
- C. To “mortify” means to “put to death.”
 - 1. To take its strength, vigor, and power so that it cannot act or exert on its own.
 - 2. The “old man” is crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6) and we are dead with him (v. 8).

3. This happens in regeneration [being born again]; the Holy Spirit opposes the work of the flesh (Gal. 5:17).
4. This work is done by degrees and is to be carried on “all our days.”
5. “This it is the constant duty of believers to render a death blow to the deeds of the flesh, that they may not have life and strength to bring forth their destructive desires.”

V. The promise of this duty is life.

- A. Not just eternal life in heaven, but spiritual life, with joy, comfort, and vigor, in this world.
- B. The vigor, power and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh. *This is the second motive for this duty.*