

**John Owen on Dealing with Sin:**  
**Lesson 14: The Work of Christ and the Power of the Spirit**  
from Various Scriptures  
adapted from Owen's *Mortification of Sin* ch. XIV

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.

The directions given so far have been for the preparation of mortification rather than to effect it. These things are necessary to prepare the heart and without them the work of mortification cannot be accomplished. The directions for the work of mortification itself are only two.

*Mortify sin.*

**I. Set your faith upon Christ for the killing of your sin.**

**A. By faith, fill your heart with a right consideration of the provision that God has made in the work of Christ for the mortification of your sins.**

1. Though you are unable to conquer your own sin and are weary of fighting against it, Jesus Christ can give you relief: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).
2. In your greatest distress and anguish, consider the fullness of grace, all the riches and treasures of strength, might, and help that are laid up in Christ for our support (John 1:16; Col. 1:19).
3. Let these great truths abide in your mind.
  - a. Consider that he came to give repentance (Acts 5:31) and true repentance includes mortification. We must obtain purging grace by abiding in him (John 15:3). To trust in the fullness we have in Christ for our supply is an important part of our abiding in Christ. Both our introduction to Christ and our abiding in Christ are by faith (Rom. 11:19-20).
  - b. Consider your weakness, instability, and inability. The work of mortification is too hard for you. You make vows over-and-over again and do not keep them. Time and again you have thought you had the victory only to be deceived. Despite this, you must lift up your hands and strengthen yourself because the Lord Jesus Christ has all the fullness of grace and all the fullness of power to slay your enemies. There is sufficient provision in him for your relief and assistance. He can take your drooping and dying soul and make you more than a conqueror (Rom. 8:37).
  - c. Isaiah 40:27-31.
  - d. God strengthened Paul under his temptation with the sufficiency of his grace (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul was not immediately released from his trial, yet the sufficiency of God's grace sustained him.

**B. Raise up your heart in faith with an expectation of relief from Christ.**

1. Though it may seem a long while to you while you are in your trouble and perplexity, the victory will come at the time appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ. When it comes, it will be the best time for its accomplishment. Look for it from his hand with an expectation of

when and how he might do it. “If you will not believe, surely you will not be established” (Isa. 7:9).

2. What basis do I, as a believer, have for expecting help from Christ?
  - a. If you cannot get help from Christ, there is no place else to turn to for help.
    - i. It is Christ in whom all fullness dwells (Col. 1:19) and it is from his fountain that we are to receive grace for grace (John 1:16).
    - ii. Any other way or endeavor without Christ’s help will be to no purpose.
  - b. Consider his mercy, tenderness, and kindness as he represents us as our Great High Priest at the right hand of God.
    - i. He has the tenderness of a mother to her nursing child (Isa. 66:13).
    - ii. Hebrews 2:17-18. Christ is moved to help because he himself has suffered.
    - iii. Hebrews 4:15-16. We should expect relief from Christ in time of need.
    - iv. No soul has ever perished by the power of any lust, sin, or corruption who could raise his soul by faith to expect such relief from Jesus Christ (Isa. 55:1-3; Rev. 3:18).
  - c. Consider the faithfulness of the one who has promised.
    - i. This is the attribute of God that will strengthen your expectation of his help. God has promised to send help in our time of need and he will fulfill his word to the uttermost.
    - ii. God compares his covenant to the order of the heavens which do not change (Jer. 31:36) and to the morning which surely will come (Ps. 130:6).
3. There are two particular advantages that always attend this expectation of help from Jesus Christ:
  - a. It engages the Lord to give a full and speedy assistance.
    - i. The Lord gives his promise that he will not forsake those that seek him (Ps. 9:10).
    - ii. When the heart learns to rest in God, he will surely vindicate this confidence.
  - b. It encourages the heart to make use of every means by which Christ may reveal himself to the soul.
    - i. When you seek help from a man, you use means. A beggar lies at the door with his cup at the ready. Christ has appointed “means of grace” for your benefit to obtain grace.
    - ii. “As our faith looks to Christ for help, it sets our hearts to work. It is not an idle, groundless hope.”
    - iii. If there is any vigor, efficacy, or power in prayer or the other means of grace to help in mortifying sin, then a person will be interested in it because of his expectation of help.
4. Some particulars to remember relating to what has been said:
  - a. Place your faith particularly upon the death, blood, and cross of Christ; that is, on Christ as crucified and slain.
    - i. Mortification is one of the main purposes of the death of Christ and will surely be accomplished by him. He died to destroy the works of the devil. He “gave

Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works (Titus 2:14).

- ii. "...Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).
  - iii. This Christ accomplishes by degrees. Our washing and cleansing are ascribed to his blood (1 John 1:7; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 1:5). His blood purifies our conscience (Heb. 9:14). All the supplies of the Spirit and all the expressions of grace and power come from this which is why Paul can say "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Rom. 6:2). See also Rom. 6:4-6.
  - iv. The death of Christ is the cause of our victory. It secured the Holy Spirit who works mortification. *As surely as he was crucified for our sin, we shall surely be crucified to our sin.*
- b. When you meditate upon the death of Christ, keep in mind the power available to you and your desire to be conformed to Christ (Phil. 3:10; Col. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).
    - i. Let faith gaze upon Christ as he is set forth crucified and dying for us. Look upon him under the weight of our sins, praying, bleeding, and dying (1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 5:1-2; Col. 3:13-14).
    - ii. Bring him in that condition into your heart by faith. Apply his blood to shed your corruptions.
    - iii. Do this daily.

## **II. Consider the part that the Holy Spirit plays in mortification and the effects that are particularly ascribed to him.**

- A. He alone clearly and fully convinces the heart of the evil, guilt, and danger of the corruption, lust or sin that is to be mortified.**
  - 1.
- B. The Spirit alone reveals to us the fullness of Christ for our relief.** This consideration guards against false ways and despair.
- C. The Spirit alone establishes the heart in the expectation of relief from Christ.** This is the sovereign means of mortification.
- D. The Spirit alone brings the cross of Christ into our hearts with sin-killing power.** By the Spirit we are baptized into the death of Christ.
- E. The Spirit is the author and finisher of our salvation (Eph. 3:16-18).** He gives new supplies and influences of grace for holiness and sanctification when our resolve to resist is weakened (Eph. 3:16-18).
- F. All of our soul's prayers to God in our need are supported by the Spirit (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 8:26; 2 Cor. 12:8).** Where do we find power, life, and vigor in prayer if not from the Spirit?

Conclusion: Without a proper consideration of this, sin will have a great advantage, and tend to the hardening of your heart.