

## Sanctification: Transformed Into the Image of Christ

### Lesson 25

#### I. Introduction

- a. Last week we briefly mentioned the idea of mortification as playing a significant role in our ability to produce new neuronal connections as we **refocus** our attention on a Biblical response to sin.
- b. Refocusing instructs the brain as to what good and godly action to produce. This is part of the **preparatory** work that the believer must do to understand his sin and temptation from God's perspective.
- c. This is where the concept of mortification fits into the doctrine of Sanctification. Mortification results in a **deep** and abiding view of sin derived from a Biblical understanding of sin from God's point of view.
- d. Since the Bible makes clear that while the Holy Spirit enables mortification, it is a duty of the believer. Therefore, we need to understand this profound issue and how it is carried out in a **practical** way on a daily basis.

#### II. The Biblical Basis of Mortification

- a. The Biblical **foundation** of mortification lies in the words of the apostle Paul: Rom 8:13, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live;"
- b. In this passage Paul lays out five elements which require our attention: First, A **duty** prescribed: "Mortify the deeds of the body."
- c. Secondly, The persons are denoted to **whom** it is prescribed: "Ye," — "if ye mortify."
- d. Thirdly, There is a **promise** annexed to that duty: "Ye shall live." This is an infallible connection between true mortification and eternal life: if you use this means, you shall obtain that end; if you do mortify, you shall live.
- e. Fourthly, The **cause** or means of the performance of this duty, — the Spirit: "If ye through the Spirit." It must be done by the Spirit, all other ways of mortification are vain, all other helps leave us helpless.
- f. Fifthly, The **conditionality** of the whole proposition, in which duty, means, and promise are contained: "If ye," etc.

#### III What is to be Mortified?

- a. The mortification of the deeds of one's body **hinges** on our profound understanding of ourselves as being totally depraved. Rom 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: KJV*
- b. Mortification requires that we **realize** that every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could; every covetous desire would be robbery or oppression, every thought of unbelief would be atheism, if allowed to grow to its full extent.
- c. Inherently we understand that sin will not only be striving, acting, rebelling and troubling us, but if let alone, if not **continually** mortified, it will bring forth great, cursed, scandalous, soul-destroying sins which will cause the enemies of God to blaspheme.
- d. To *mortify* is a metaphorical expression. To kill any living thing, is to take **away** the principle of all his strength, vigor, and power, so that he cannot act or exert, or put forth any proper action of his own.
- e. Indwelling sin is therefore compared to a living person, called "the **old man**," with his faculties, and properties, his wisdom, craft, subtlety, strength; this, says the apostle, must be killed, put to death, mortified, dealt with by the Spirit.
- f. While the **cross** of Christ did indeed, meritoriously, utterly mortify and slay the "old man" and we are thus said to be "crucified with Christ," and ourselves to be "dead" with him, there remains an outworking of this spiritual reality. This is mortification. Rom 6:6-8 *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. <sup>7</sup> For he that is dead is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: KJV*
- g. In regeneration a principle contrary to the flesh, and destructive of it, is planted in our hearts; but the whole work of mortification is by degrees to be carried on towards perfection **all** our days. Rom 6:4 *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. KJV*

#### IV. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Mortification

- a. The Holy Spirit mortifies sin by causing our hearts to abound in grace and He grows the fruits that are contrary to the flesh. He **causes** us to grow, thrive, flourish, and abound in those graces which are contrary, opposite, and destructive to all indwelling sin. Titus 3:5 *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*
- b. The Holy Spirit mortifies by a **real** physical agency working on the root and habit of sin, resulting in the weakening, destroying, and consuming it by degrees.
- c. He brings the **cross of Christ** into the heart of a believer by faith, and gives us communion with Christ in his death, and fellowship in his sufferings. This over time actively conforms us to Christ.
- d. He "works in us **to will** and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*
- e. He works **the work** of mortification in us." Isa 26:12, *for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*

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- f. He causes us to **pray**, and is our intercessor even though we are exhorted to do all these things. Rom 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. KJV*
- g. All the while He accomplishes the work of our mortification in such a way that it is still an act of **our** obedience. In doing so He preserves our own liberty and free will.
- h. He does this by working upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections; He works in us and with us, not against us or without us. His work **facilitates** our work.

**V. What Mortification Is Not**

- a. To mortify a sin is **not** utterly to kill, root it out, and destroy it, that it should have no more hold at all nor reside in our hearts. Phil 3:12 *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*
- b. It is not the **superficial** and outward forsaking of the practice of any sin. Such would only produce a heart that is more cunning; not a new heart that is more holy.
- c. The mortification of sin is not in the outward **refinement** of temperament such as a *quiet, sedate* nature. Mortification is of spiritual sin not public persona and involves such things self-denial, unbelief, envy in the heart.
- d. Mortification is not a temporary **suppression** of sin or substitution of one sin for another.
- e. Occasional conquests of sin do not amount to a mortifying of it nor does a repentance which is **caused** by being caught in a sin necessarily mean that it is mortified.

**VI. Mortification Described**

- a. First, mortification is the **weakening** of sins' indwelling disposition, by which it inclines, entices, impels to evil, rebels, opposes, fights against God.
- b. This is done by implanting in the believer a conscious and habitual **predisposition** against sin. At the same time we are given grace that stands in direct opposition to sin and is destructive of it.
- c. For example, by the implanting and growth of humility, **pride** is weakened; uncleanness is overcome by purity of mind and conscience, love of this world is defeated by heavenly-mindedness.
- d. Mortification is the reduction of the vigor of the desire. It is being **willing** to rise up in war with that conduct, thought or predisposition and to act in opposition to the impulse to sin. Rom 7:23 *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. KJV*
- e. It is a conscious mental **preparedness** to fight and contend against personal sin. Knowing that you have such an enemy to deal with, to take notice of it, to consider it as an enemy indeed, and one that is to be destroyed by all means possible.
- f. This is each believer "knowing the plague of his own heart," without which **no other** work of sanctification can be done.
- g. It involves **laboring** to be acquainted with the ways, wiles, methods, advantages, and occasions of sins' success. This is the beginning of this warfare.
- h. Mortification requires knowing the greatest **strength** of our internal enemy — how he brings occasions of temptation and opportunities to sin. It means understanding the pleas, pretences, reasoning, and strategies, and variations and excuses he presents.
- i. It is setting the wisdom of the Spirit against the craft of the old man; to trace this serpent in all its turnings and windings; to be able to **perceive** it's most secret and imperceptible manifestations in our daily lives.
- j. It is attacking sinful inclinations with all the things that are grievous, killing, and destructive to them. Thus the believer never thinks his lust dead because it is quiet, but labors continuously because God's standard is **perfection**. Col 3:5-6 *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*
- k. Frequent success against any sinful desire is evidence of mortification. However, success is not a mere delaying of sin, but pursuing it to a complete conquest over it. In this continual effort God is **glorified** and the believer becomes sanctified. 1 Thess 4:7 *For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. KJV*

**VII. Application: How Are You Doing?**

- a. Some of the things that impede mortification are:
  - 1. Ignoring or minimizing known sin; "I'm only human"
  - 2. Paying attention to one sin but excusing another: "I may speed while driving but at least I'm not an adulterer"
  - 3. Being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin "Lots of Christians do what I do"
  - 4. Failing to apprehend God's hatred of sin "Christ has paid my sin debt and I need do nothing with that which remains"