

Sunday School
Mortification of Sin
Lesson 4

Truth 3:

The life, vigor, and strength of a Christian's spiritual life depends much on their mortification of sin.

- I. Life, vigor and strength does not necessarily follow upon mortification.
 - A. Consider Heman Psalm 88
 - B. It is God's prerogative to "create" life, vigor and strength. (Isa. 57:18-19)
 - C. The use of means for obtaining peace is ours, but the prerogative is God's.
- II. (Speaking Precisely) Mortification is not an immediate cause of the spiritually vigorous life.
 - A. The immediate cause is the knowledge (Faith) of all our privileges of adoption.
 1. What is adoption?
 - a. Eph. 1:3-5
 - b. ALL those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption: by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God; have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a father; yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.¹
 2. What are the privileges?
 3. Who seals these to the Church? (Romans 8:14-17)
 - a. Frozen venison on the grill likened to deepening realization.

¹ Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: Edinburgh Edition* (Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1851), 71–72.

b. E.g. my default view of phone calls versus Romans 8:28.

III. However, in ordinary life our spiritual vigor and comfort depends much on mortification. Every unmortified sin will do two things.

A. It will weaken you and deprive you of your vigor.

1. Psalm 38
2. Psalm 40
3. An unmortified lust will drink up the spirit, and all the vigour of the soul, and weaken it for all duties²
4. Unmortified sin untunes and unframes the heart. It diverts the heart from an ability for communion with God. How?
 - a. What is a diversion?
 - b. It captures your adoring imagination. It lays hold on the affections, rendering its object beloved and desirable, so expelling the love of the Father.
 - c. You are meant to pant for God, but you believe a lie and begin panting for the creation instead of the creature.
 - d. 1 John 2:15; James 4:4
 - e. Binds the most important motivational centers of existence
 - 1) Fear (Prov. 1:7)
 - 2) Hope (Psalm 20:7)
 - 3) Love (Matthew 22:37)
5. Unmortified sin controls the use of the senses, imagination and intellect.
 - a. The senses etc. are the Amazon Prime or conveyor belt of whatever unmortified desires control the soul.
 - b. Once entangled, Satan descends like a spider upon a fly stuck in his web.
 - c. Joshua 7:21 and the imagination

² John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, n.d.), 22.

1) The presence of an unmortified sin captures the imagination and uses it to turn the golden wedge over and over. Like a cow with cud, the mind ruminates on the beauty of the object. The loveliness supersedes even obedience to God himself.

d. Rom. 6:19

e. Heart Checks

1) Ps. 42:1 [Can you say this?]

2) Why do you lose sleep?

6. It breaks out and actually hinders duty. The ambitious man must be studying, and the worldling must be working or contriving, and the sensual, vain person providing himself for vanity, when they should be engaged in the worship of God.³

a. I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy.... I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and uninteresting.... Again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that's always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I've become Somebody, I still have to prove that I'm *Somebody*. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will. (Lynn Hirshberg. "The Misfit." *Vanity Fair* 54, no. 4 (April 1991).

B. It will darken the soul and deprive you of your comfort and peace.

1. As sin *weakens*, so it *darkens* the soul. It is a cloud, a thick cloud, that spreads itself over the face of the soul, and intercepts all the beams of God's love and favour. It takes away all sense of the privilege of our

³ Ibid.

adoption; and if the soul begins to gather up thoughts of consolation, sin quickly scatters them: of which afterward.⁴

IV. Mortification tends to the garden of God's graces within our hearts.

A. What are God's graces?

1. Several Meanings

- a. God's posture or state
- b. God's declaration of the new covenant under Christ
- c. The Offices from Christ both ordinary and extraordinary
- d. Non-saving graces (talents)
- e. Saving grace

2. Acts 11:19-24

3. 1 Cor. 15:10

4. 2 Cor. 12:7-10

5. 1 Tim. 4:14

6. Gal. 3:2; 5:22

- a. The Spirit is the fountain and streams of living graces are apportioned to each of us.

B. List of some Graces

1. Faith, Joy, Love, Hope, Peace, Patience, Wisdom, Peacemaking, Humility, etc.
2. This indicates the significant truth that the gospel is a divine administration which radiates through all of life
 - a. Daisy like flowers
3. Most proper way to speak is of the benefits of the indwelling Holy Spirit and His graces in us.

C. Mortification is pulling the weeds and pests

1. Rev. 3:2

D. Vivification is the feeding of the graces

⁴ Ibid., 23.

1. Eph. 4:30-5:1

2. 1 Peter 3:1-6

E. The heart is like the sluggard's field,—so overgrown with weeds that you can scarce see the good corn. Such a man may search for faith, love, and zeal, and scarce be able to find any; and if he do discover that these graces are there yet alive and sincere, yet they are so weak, so clogged with lusts, that they are of very little use; they remain, indeed, but are ready to die. But now let the heart be cleansed by mortification, the weeds of lust constantly and daily rooted up (as they spring daily, nature being their proper soil), let room be made for grace to thrive and flourish,—how will every grace act its part, and be ready for every use and purpose!⁵

⁵ Ibid.