

Mortification

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 October 2022

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Yes, it's Psalm 27 and verses 1 to 5. The Lord's my light, my Savior and my light, who will make me dismayed.

The Lord's the stronghold of my life, why should I be afraid? When evildoers threaten me to take my life away, my adversaries and my foes will stumble in that day.

And so on down to verse 5, for in his dwelling he will keep me safe in troubled days. Within his tent he'll shelter me, and on a rock me raise.

The Lord's my Savior and my light. If you could be able to stand, please stand to sing. The Lord's my Savior and my light, who will make me dismayed.

The Lord's the stronghold of my life, why should I be afraid?

[1 : 17] When even you are set in me to take my life away, my other side is on my foes, will stumble there in the day.

Although I'm heartily can't see, my heart will feel no dread.

Though war against me should arise, I will lift up my head.

One thing I need, O Lord, the Lord. Lord, the Lord. And bless us seek always, that I may come within your sight, and dwell there all my days.

And dwell there all my days. That on the beauty of the Lord, I constantly make his, and in his eyes may see to your direction in his ways.

[3 : 40] For in his way, in me will be, me save in trouble days.

When they may stand, till shelterly and on a rock be raised.

Let's once more unite in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Lord, our gracious God, eternal and ever blessed, we give thanks for the wondrous words that we have been singing in your praise.

Words that teach us of the security that belongs to your people, of your own keeping of them, of the way that you protect them, of the way that they are assured victory ultimately over all their enemies.

And Lord, we thank you for the encouragement that that gives us, in a world in which we know there is much at enmity with the gospel, at enmity with your people, and with their commitment to your cause, and their profession of your ways.

[5 : 03] And we thank you tonight that you have reminded us of these things, so that we might praise you, that we might seek to bring you further glory in our own lives.

And Lord, we thank you for all aspects of your word, your word that guides us not only into these times of worship, but also throughout all the avenues of life.

We give thanks, Lord, that we can reflect the psalmist's own conviction, as he said, that your word was a light to his feet and a lamp to his path.

We ask, O Lord, that your light will shine upon us each day, shine upon our path to give us the guidance that we need. Even if we, at times, O Lord, cannot find exact answers to the questions that may be in our hearts.

Yet we thank you, Lord, for the guidance of your word, for the light that it brings us, for the great principles that you call upon us through it to follow and to apply in our own lives.

[6 : 03] We thank you tonight, Lord, for the congregational life that we experience, for your promises are directed to us, not only as individuals, but also as congregations of your people, gatherings of your people, your church, Lord, throughout the world, as a gathered people of God.

And we thank you tonight that there are so many benefits for us in being gathered together. But help us, Lord, to see that it is primarily our great duty and privilege to gather before you to give evidence to our own hearts and to one another and to the world around us that you are God, that you are worthy of being worshipped, worthy of being praised, worthy of being followed in the way in which we seek to do daily.

We ask, O Lord, that you would bless to us this time together here under your word. We pray that your word once again will be open to us. We pray that our minds may be open to receive its teaching.

We acknowledge, Lord, that there is much in it that challenges us as we come to your word and read it and take it at face value as it speaks to us. We acknowledge, Lord, that there is much there that causes us to draw breath and causes us to reflect deeply on our own relationship to you and to sin and to the world in which we live and to one another as your people.

And we confess, too, O Lord, with thankfulness that these things are brought to us in your word so that we might have our lives regulated by it. We give thanks, too, for the many promises, for the many ways in which you assure your people of your continuing love and of the way in which that follows them into all the circumstances of life in which they may find themselves.

[7 : 49] We treasure, Lord, these things for ourselves, too, as a congregation. We thank you that as we reflect upon the life of the congregation that we can look back over many years of your faithfulness, many years where you have shown, O Lord, that you are indeed a God who is faithful and trustworthy, one who is always true to his promises, one who does not withhold from his people that good that you intend to do for them, that you have always purposed for them.

For you will withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly, as your word tells us. And we pray that we may be able with the psalmist also to sing in praise of your goodness, how great is the goodness which you keep in store for those who fear you.

And we give thanks, O Lord, that that reminds us and encourages us that your goodness goes before us into each and every day of our lives and on into eternity when your people expect to experience yet more of your own goodness in providing for them.

We pray tonight, Lord, for all who gather in your name elsewhere, not only in this town and locality, but throughout our land and throughout the world. We thank you for faithful gatherings of your people in days when we know that the number of your people is relatively small compared to the population that we are part of.

O Lord, our God, bless your word, we pray, to your people and make them living witnesses and effective witnesses in this world. Help us, Lord, we pray, in all that we seek to do for you.

[9 : 29] And by your grace, Lord, we ask that you would bless our efforts to make the gospel and the principles of the gospel known to our communities.

Help us as a congregation, O Lord, as we hold forth the word of life in different ways. And we ask that you would bless your word to that end, both to those who are adults, those who are in upper years, those who are young, those who are children, those who are even in the stage of creche.

O Lord, we ask that as we know your word in our midst, so we as families and we as a congregation may grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we commend ourselves to you, O Lord, as a people. We pray that you would grant your blessing to those of our number who are away at this time on holiday.

Remember them, we pray, and keep them safe. Remember those who are ill as well of our number and can't be with us during these days. We think, too, of those who are recovering from surgery, those who are experiencing difficulties in regard to that.

[10 : 38] We pray for those, Lord, too, who are anticipating surgery or treatment. We pray for them and ask that you would quieten any anxieties they may have about these things.

Enable them, O Lord, in bringing them before yourself to draw their strength and comfort and assurance from you. Remember those who mourn the passing of loved ones. Once again, we pray for them.

O Lord, our God, virtually every week that we meet together here, we know that there have been those who have lost loved ones as the days have gone by. And we pray for these families once again as we know them.

We pray, O Lord, that you would comfort them. We pray for any of them who may not know you savingly, that you would use even such difficult providences as these to speak into their hearts. And to assure them, O Lord, that they are welcome in your presence if they come in the name of Christ and come to seek your own forgiveness and acceptance as we all must.

[11 : 39] We pray also, O Lord, tonight for those who have the happy experience of children born into their families. We pray for them and give thanks for them.

We pray that you would, Lord, grant your own blessing to parents and to children alike. We pray that these infants may grow under your favor and under your protective care. We pray for them health wise as well.

And ask that you would be pleased, O Lord, to watch over them and to grant to them your blessing as the days go by. And we pray, too, that you would bless our land at this time.

As we extend our prayers, Lord, to cover all our people, we ask that you would bless our circumstances to us. Even though we know that there are many difficulties attending our present circumstances, Lord, in providence, that we pray for those who have difficulties in regard to income. Remember those who have lost work and are searching for work. Remember those who face poverty and experience poverty. Remember, we pray those who use food banks, both locally and throughout the nation.

[12 : 49] Lord, give them not to be ashamed of such. But we thank you for that provision. And we pray for those who administer it and manage it from day to day.

And we pray, O Lord, that we especially as a people, you would turn us away from the things that have to do with sin and ungodliness. Those things we know from your word are unacceptable to you.

And, O Lord, be merciful to us as a people, as a nation. Bless our leaders at this time. Bless especially the situation in Westminster. Lord, we pray for all who are concerned in it.

And we pray that you would bring stability out of it. And we ask, O Lord, that whatever you have in store for us as a people, and we know that we are undeserving of the least of your mercies.

We have spurned your laws. We have turned aside from righteousness. We have exalted evil. O Lord, we have done all this in your sight. And yet we look to your word and find evidence in it of how even then in times of great evil in the past, you overlooked these sins in your mercy and came with days of reviving power, days of quickening, days of gospel, precious gospel blessing.

[14 : 04] And it is, Lord, our prayer that this would be so for our day as well. And we ask that you would continue to bless us here with your favor now as we wait upon you. Guide and conduct us into your word, we pray.

And all we ask is in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Let's sing again to God's praise. We're singing from Psalm 65.

65 and sing. Psalms page 82. The tune this time is done. Firmly in singing verses 1 to 5. And Zion, praise awaits you, Lord.

To you our vows will pay. To you all people will come near. You hear us when we pray. When we were overwhelmed by sins and guilt upon us lay, you pardoned all our trespasses and washed our guilt away.

And so on to the end of verse 5. In Zion, praise awaits you, Lord. In Zion, praise awaits you, Lord.

[15 : 08] In Zion, praise awaits you, Lord. To you our vows will pay. To you, O people, welcome near.

You hear us when we pray. When we were overwhelmed by sins and guilt upon us lay, You pardoned all our trespasses and washed our guilt away.

I bless our clothes you choose not bring, Within your courts of grace.

We're filled with blessings in your hearts, In your roles, holy place.

With awesome things of righteousness, You have said us, O God, Our Savior, hope of our besties, And all the earth abroad.

[17 : 04] Let's now read God's Word. We're reading from Romans tonight. A letter to the Romans, chapter 8. Beginning at the beginning of the chapter, And we'll read down as far as verse 17.

So Romans, chapter 8, and from the beginning.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, Who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the Spirit set their mind on the things of the Spirit.

[18 : 14] To set the mind on the flesh is death. To set the mind on the flesh is death, But to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, For it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, If in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

But if Christ is in you, Although the body is dead because of sin, The Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies Through His Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brothers, we are debtors, Not to the flesh to live according to the flesh, For if you live according to the flesh you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

[19 : 24] For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, But you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, By whom we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, Provided we suffer with Him, In order that we may also be glorified with Him.

And so on may the Lord again follow with His blessing, Our reading of His Word. We are going to sing once again this time in Psalm 51 in the Scottish Psalter.

51 verses 6 to 13. The tune this time is St. Kilda. That is on page 281. Behold thou in the inward parts with truth delighted art, And wisdom thou shalt make me know within the hidden part.

Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so. Yea, wash thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow. Of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice, That so these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

[20 : 49] We'll sing on until the end of verse 13. Then will I teach thy ways, And to those that transgressors be, And those that sinners are, Shall then be turned unto thee.

Behold thou in the inward parts. With truth delighted art, And wisdom thou shalt make me know, When the Lord is in the midst of the kingdom of God. Behold thou in the inward parts. Behold thou in the inward parts.

With truth delighted art. And wisdom thou shalt make me know, With truth delighted art. With truth delighted art. And wisdom thou shalt make me know, Within the hidden part.

And wisdom thou shalt make me know, Within the hidden part. And wisdom thou shalt make me know, Within the hidden part.

And wisdom thou shalt make me know, Within the hidden part. whether art. You'dahl with nieces of spring yel Oui, I shall reclancen so ne- Pull thy ways, When the washclur be on thepai sele- I shall be cleansed so, Trow thou red, You're dressed the geol, TheYA.

[22 : 01] And I shall be whiter than the snow.

All gladness and love, joyfulness, make me hear thy voice.

That so this very old switcher has broken, may rejoice.

All my iniquities, Lord, I, by this light, from my sin.

He is a clean heart, Lord, bring you, and my strength be with him.

[23 : 23] Cast me not from thy side nor take thy holy strength away.

Restore me thy salvation's joy, with thy peace let me stay.

Then will I teach thy ways unto those that trespassers be.

And those that sinners are shall then be turned unto thee.

Well, let's turn now tonight to the passage we read in Romans, Romans chapter 8, especially verses 12 and 13. Very difficult in some ways to just extract a verse or two from the whole chapter because it's so wonderfully tied together.

[24 : 51] And the way that Paul leads us through his own argument or reasoning throughout the whole of this really wonderful chapter. We'll read from verse 12.

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

It's virtually impossible to go through life without being indebted to someone or not to find somebody that's indebted to ourselves in some way or other.

We're very frequently under obligation to others, whether it's in monetary terms or even just, as we commonly say, well, I owe you one when they've done us a favor.

In other words, you've come to be placed under obligation to return that favor to someone. So, all the way through life, we're very familiar with the matter of being under obligation or being indebted to people in various ways and for different things.

[26 : 03] And that's really the kind of idea that Paul has here in a spiritual sense. He says, verse 12 here, we are debtors. We are debtors. He then says, not to the flesh.

And we're going to have to explore a bit about what that means, the flesh, and what he means not being debtors to the flesh. But he doesn't actually complete the balance, if you like, that you might expect.

You might expect him to say, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, but we are debtors to something else. And he doesn't say that. But what he does say, it makes it fairly obvious, I think, that what he really says is that we are indeed debtors to the Spirit of God, to the Holy Spirit.

We are indebted to the Holy Spirit for what He's done. And, of course, you need to go all the way back to chapter 6, especially for that, and we'll maybe touch on that as we go through our study this evening.

But we are indebted to the Spirit. We are debtors to the Spirit, not to live according to the flesh, but instead to put to death the deeds of the body so that we shall live.

[27 : 08] That's the balance, I think, in these two verses where he's emphasizing for us. This is the one we are indebted to, the Spirit of God. And because we're indebted to Him, how do we actually, if you like, pay back our obligation to the Spirit?

Well, we live a holy life, essentially, is what it means. We put to death the deeds of the body rather than live according to the flesh.

So, these are the things that we've got in this passage. What does he mean, we are debtors not to the flesh? What does he mean by the flesh? Who is he talking to?

Well, he's talking to Christians. He's writing to the Christians in Rome, to the church in Rome. And he's saying to them here, we are debtors, including himself in that, we are debtors not to the flesh. And the flesh really essentially means our fallen humanness in itself, our sinfulness. And even when we're conscious of the fact that God has delivered us, as chapter 6 puts it so well, if you look at chapter 6 and verse 20 there, for example, you'll see, when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

[28 : 23] In other words, he's saying, this is what we're all naturally like. This is how we are as we come into the world. This is how we are until God changes us and changes things for us, until it changes the direction of our life.

We are actually under the control or the directorship, if you like, of sin. The sin that's true of every one of us. The sin that is in us. Our sinful nature.

Our sinfulness. Our fallenness. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. In other words, you did not have righteousness in your life.

You were cut off from it. You were free from that. But now, he says, what fruit were you getting in those times? The end of these things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

In other words, when God saves us, when God changes us inwardly, when He changes our hearts, when He takes us out of the dominance of sin, when He takes us out of being controlled by sin, of sin being the director, if you like, of our life, He doesn't just take us out of that and leave us in our neutrality.

[29 : 43] He takes us under the directorship of the Holy Spirit. So, instead of the power of sin working in our life as it once was, we have the power of the Holy Spirit in its place.

Sin has not gone away. We're not sinless as Christians, but we have a big change taking place in our life. God has set us free from sin, from the power, from the dominance of sin, and He's brought us under the wonderful directorship or control of the Holy Spirit.

And that essentially is what He's saying here, you have your fruit unto holiness. Instead of following the ways of sin, God has turned His people into following the ways of holiness.

They're not perfect people. They're not perfectly holy. It's obvious from our lives we're not. But this is the direction that our life is now in, as we're in Christ, as we're led by the Spirit, as we're under the directorship of the Spirit.

That is essentially the great change in someone's life when they've gone from being directed by sin and in the ways of sin to being directed by the Holy Spirit.

[30 : 55] So, that's really the flesh. He's delivered us from the flesh, and therefore, He's saying it isn't logical, it isn't in keeping with that deliverance, that we should actually give our allegiance to the flesh anymore.

He says that in chapter 6 itself. What shall we then say? Are we continuing sin that grace may abound? By no means. How shall we who die to sin still live in it?

He's really arguing that sin is not now the controlling feature or principle in our life, so we can't live for it. We can't live after. We can't live as we once did in a desire to please the flesh, to please sin. We are debtors not to the flesh. We are not under obligation anymore to the flesh. God has delivered us from that. We're now under obligation to the Holy Spirit, and that means being led by the Holy Spirit into holiness of life.

That's what He said in chapter 6, wasn't it? You have your fruit unto holiness, and the end of that, the terminus of that, is eternal life. Now, it's great to see young folks here tonight.

[32 : 09] There's some big words here, and I'll try and explain them if I can, but it's wonderful to see children here at the evening service as well. Well, as you know, sanctification is what the Bible, a word the Bible uses for God taking our lives and setting them apart to be for Himself, and delivering us from sin and making us holy is part of that as well.

And that's really what these passages, these verses here deal with as well, because when we're delivered by God from the power of sin, from the dominance of sin, and placed us under the leadership, the directorship of the Holy Spirit, it comes to involve what we're going to call as our heading tonight, mortification of sin.

The word mortification is not here, but it's in the older translation, and I think it's a good word. It essentially means the same thing as what Paul is saying here, you put to death the deeds of the body.

Mortification is putting something to death. And what he's saying here, mortification, what is it we put to death? The deeds of the body, the flesh, the workings of the flesh, the things of sin.

That's what holiness really is about, isn't it? You follow the Holy Spirit's direction, you're concerned to live a holy life, to turn from sin, to put sin more and more behind you, so that you live a life that's pleasing to God.

[33 : 39] And that's really what mortification here is about. It's dealing with sin as a new creation, as a Christian, as someone in Christ, so that you're actually putting sin to death.

Now, it's not an easy subject to deal with. It's not something palatable to ourselves. The flesh doesn't like to be killed. The flesh doesn't like to be put to death.

That sinful aspect of our being is very reluctant to actually be done away with. That's why, as we'll see, we need the strength and the energy and the power of the Holy Spirit to do that.

But first of all, let's try and define what mortification is. And then we'll look at practicing mortification. So, defining mortification. Well, as we said, it has to do with putting the deeds of the body, putting the things of the flesh, putting sin to death. But it's interesting, the way that Paul uses different terminology, and here he's talking about something that applies to us, that we, as we'll see, are required to do.

[34 : 50] Now, when you think about mortification, putting to death the deeds of the body, the flesh, the deeds of the body, or different ways of describing it, we must not begin with what is physical.

We must not begin with the physical side of our being, our bodies. It does here talk of, specify the deeds of the body. We'll come back to that in a minute.

But when you try and define what mortification is, what it is to pursue holiness, you don't begin with your body. You don't begin with the physical.

You begin with your mind. You begin with the things of the soul. Because that's essentially what he's saying throughout this chapter, isn't it? At the beginning of the chapter, we read through it, where he talks here about those who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. What does he then say? Those who live according to the flesh, verse 5, set their minds on the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the

Spirit.

[35 : 50] To set the mind on the flesh is death. To set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

So, you see, he's taking us to the mind. He's taking us to the depth of our being. He's taking us to our soul. He's taking us to the workings of our soul. So, the flesh is really very much part of... The flesh is very much to do with that whole complex or combination of what you have in your soul, your attitude, your thoughts, your desires, your appetites, your aspirations, your motives.

Everything you could say are the motions of your soul where the flesh is concerned, where these are sinful appetites, sinful motions, sinful desires, sinful attitudes.

That's what he's saying we have to put to death. That's the flesh. That's defining mortification for us. These are the things that he's dealing with.

But, of course, you start with what's in your soul. You start with the mind, but you can't leave the body out of it because it's through our bodies, our bodily faculties, that sin, the flesh, those things that we have in us as sinful appetites and thoughts and desires, they actually work through our bodies, don't they?

[37 : 15] Because they don't just lie in our souls and never involve our bodies. The whole person is actually involved.

The root of our sin and our sinful behavior, the root of our following the ways of sin, the root of that is in our souls. But sin in us uses our bodies, our eyes, our mouths, our hands.

That's why he calls it here the deeds of the body. In other words, he's saying the workings of the flesh are essentially the deeds of the body as the workings of the flesh, our inner part, our spiritual inner being comes through in the workings of our flesh.

You remember how Jesus put it? And this is really a definition that Jesus gave. Essentially, it comes to the same thing because you remember in Mark chapter 7, this is people were called by Jesus to him and he said to them, hear me all you and understand.

And we're talking about what is it that defiles a person? What is it that makes a person defiled, dirty, grubby, spiritually, morally?

[38 : 31] He says, there is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him. But the things that come out of a person are what defile him. And when he had entered the house, he left the people.

His disciples asked him about the parable. He said, are you also without understanding? Do you not yet see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him since it does not enter his heart?

But his stomach and is expelled. And he said, what comes out of a person is what defiles him. And then he gave a list. He said, it's from within, from inside a person, from our soul, from out of the heart of man, as he put it, comes evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these evil things come from within and they defile a person. Where does, where do all of these things actually come from?

He says, they come from the heart. You find a person committing adultery. You find a person engaged in theft. You find a person using really bad language.

[39 : 56] Those things don't come from the body, even if the body is used in actually engaging in them. You don't find somebody who's set on committing adultery, blaming, or being in a position to blame the body for what's happened.

The sinful appetite behind that, as it is of all these other things that Jesus mentions, actually comes from within. And once that sinful appetite has reached a certain point, and then that person wants to follow it through, then your body comes to actually be the means by which that sinful appetite reaches accomplishment.

That's the flesh. And mortification is putting these things to death. Dealing with these inner sinful appetites, the flesh, in a way that actually puts them to death, killing them at the root, if you like.

That's one of the things that defines the difference between a person who's in Christ and a person who's not. Because if you look, if I look back over my own life, I can't say that as a youngster I wasn't taught right and wrong.

I can't say that I didn't know a definition of sin and what it was. And I would be told the implications of living a sinful life. But it didn't concern me. I didn't want to do away with these things.

[41 : 24] And any time I was in church and any time listening to the gospel or listening to Christians talking about their lives and giving me some advice, I didn't like that because it asked me to face up to these inward appetites that I didn't want to get rid of, that I didn't want to mortify, that I didn't want to put to death.

But when the Lord came into my life and when the Lord came into your life as a Christian, things changed. The things that you weren't once concerned with, the things that characterized the world out there to a great extent tonight, the things that characterized so much of our society, they're not things which concern people inwardly to an extent that they really think, well, I've got to get rid of this, I've got to deal with this, I've got a problem inside me, I've got a problem of my mind and my soul and I need to have it dealt with, it only comes when the Holy Spirit takes over your life, when your life is in the hands of Christ, then things change.

And that's what defines, one of the things at least, that defines the difference. Because the person that's now under the directorship of the Spirit hates sin, doesn't want to live for sin, is concerned about any remnant of sin being left in your life.

You want to put it out, you want to kill it, you want to put it beneath your feet, you pray to God, help me Lord to get rid of it, you pray for the Holy Spirit's energy to help you deal with it, because essentially it makes you unlike Jesus, it makes you unlike Christ, and you know that likeness to Christ is the objective of sanctification, of living a holy life, because that's the perfection that God is aiming at and that you desire as well in your own life.

So, defining mortification involves understanding something of what the flesh is, and how the flesh is the inward side of us, and how the appetites and actions and movements of our souls sinfully take our bodily functions and use these in the service of sin.

[43 : 42] Well, what he's saying here is that's not the kind of life you now live. God has delivered you from that. He has made you bond servants of the Spirit, bond servants no longer of sin to serve sin.

You're no longer debtors to the flesh, but you are debtors to the Holy Spirit, to follow holiness of life. And how then is mortification practiced, if that's briefly a definition of it?

Well, it is indeed we who need to put it to death. So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh, for if you live according to the flesh you will die, and so on. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.

Now, notice what it's saying. He's not saying that this is something that's done for us, it's not something that's done in us, it's something done by us. If you, by the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.

You see, the Lord gives the Holy Spirit to His people, and He's not saying here that this is a salvation by works or you'll get some reward if you try and attend to the works of the flesh and you pray for the Spirit to help you.

[45 : 00] The outcome of that will be the reward for that will be that you will have eternal life. It's not what He's saying at all. He's saying that those who have come under the directorship of the Spirit, those who have come by the grace of God to give their lives over to Jesus, over to Him, they have this great benefit, they have this amazing resource, they have the Holy Spirit living within them.

And the Holy Spirit that lives within them under His leadership leads them into the ways of sanctification. And the ways of sanctification involve mortification, putting sin to death.

That's how it works. It's not an optional extra. It's not something we can afford to leave aside in our definition of a Christian. It's very much part and partial of what the Christian life is and is about.

That's why it's a vital thing to understand something about what mortification is, but it's even more vital that you followed through in your life. That is something you are busy doing in your life and I with you.

Because either we put sin to death or else we'll come to die as a result of not doing that. Die eternally. But you see, yes, we must kill sin.

[46 : 21] We must kill the works of the flesh. We must put them to death. But we cannot do it by ourselves. That's why he's saying, if you by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.

I must put the deeds of the body to death, but if I try and do it on my own, I will miserably fail. I will end up with self-righteousness or something like that and I will not be saved and I will not actually be in the category are in the position of those who are actually putting to death the deeds of the body.

Why are you saying, by the Spirit you'll do it? One of the great theologians of the church, John Owen, has a marvelous section on mortification in volume 7 of his complete works.

You have access, you can get it online as well. This is what he's saying in terms of trying to deal with sin, in terms of trying to do away with it and deal with it successfully yourself. This is what he's saying.

Mortification, this is one of the great quotes really, I remember when I came across it first of all. Mortification from a self-strength carried on by ways of self-invention unto the end of a self-righteousness is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world.

[47 : 51] I'll read it again. Mortification from a self-strength that's by our own efforts carried on by ways of self-invention other than the way God has actually set before us by His Spirit unto the end or for the reason of a self-righteousness is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world.

You look at all the false religions in the world and that's exactly what lies foundationally to them at the heart of them because they are ways of mortification by self-strength, by ways of self-appointment or self-discovery unto the end of a self-righteousness.

Every single religion that relies on that and please don't think that it's just every religion apart from the Christian religion there are people inside the Christian religion inside the Christian church if you like for whom this teaching is simply not acceptable sadly because what they'll tell you well I've I live a good Christian life I do my best I've never killed anybody as far as I know I've not engaged in anything wicked or evil that's really brought public disgrace in myself or anybody else so no but have you ever you have to ask them have you ever lusted have you ever had in you any of the things that Jesus mentions in Mark chapter 7 have you ever coveted have you ever engaged in deceit have you ever told lies have you ever been envious have you ever slandered anyone have you ever had any sense of pride did you have any element of sensuality did you act in any way foolishly see these are the things that we tend to neglect as being really not all that sinful if you like or the world certainly would but Jesus is not

Jesus is not in the business of leaving out any sins whatever we might think of them the flesh is the flesh and the flesh the works of the flesh the works of the body the deeds of the body have to be mortified Paul is saying it's perfectly in line with that so he's given us his spirit if you by the spirit put to death the deeds of the body you shall live you see it's by the Holy Spirit you really come to appreciate at least to some extent what sin is how do you come to actually appreciate that sin is evil in its workings that sin is as it puts there enmity against God that the sinful mind is enmity against God because many people in the church would say well I wouldn't go that far I wouldn't say that I've ever had I've ever been in the situation or in the category where you could class me as an enemy of God but this is what the Bible is telling us we are inwardly natively as we are in ourselves we are in the workings of the flesh in the workings of sin we are at enmity with God that sinful mind that mind of the flesh is hostile to God it does not submit to God's law we need to deal with it we need to mortify the deeds of the body and not only does the Lord give us his Holy

Spirit to show us what sin is like to enable us to hate it and to detest it but more so than that he gives us the Holy Spirit to deal with it we deal with it by the Holy Spirit we seek to mortify the deeds of the body by the Holy Spirit we seek to put sin to death by the Holy Spirit we rely on the Holy Spirit though we are required to do the killing that's the relationship that Paul has in mind here and in fact that's really no different essentially to what Jesus said in chapter 8 of Mark and in the other Gospels as well you know yourselves the definition he gave of following him and what following him actually entailed he called him the crowd and with his disciples he said to them if anyone would come after me that's to say follow me let him deny himself let him take up his cross and follow me for whoever would save his life will lose it whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul in other words

[52 : 25] Jesus is saying if you don't give your life over to God and seek to save it some other way you're going to lose it and if you give it over to God for you to be saved then what accompanies that is crucifixion mortification you take up your cross daily and you follow Jesus we didn't make up these terms the church didn't invent them the church didn't discover all of a sudden or invent this kind of ideology that says you know as a Christian we're now saying we're now saying to you you

have to actually put sin to death if you really want to be a Christian if you want to enter into eternal life no this is the Lord's teaching the Lord was really saying to the disciples when you see somebody bearing a cross or the horizontal part of a cross as it was often in those days you had to if you were going to be crucified you carried that to the place of your crucifixion and everybody who saw you walking with that on your shoulder were able to say instantly as they saw you that man is going to his death or that woman is going to her death they're going to the cross they're going to be crucified and that's the language

Jesus used of the terms he said for discipleship of following him of what it meant to really follow Christ as we should you must take up your cross you must say to the works of the flesh every day I have to crucify you today I have to put you to death today I have to deal with you or else you're going to kill me that's the balance that's what Paul is actually saying here and in fact you remember also how he wrote very similarly to the Galatian church in Galatians where he talks there so much about the law and that we're not saved by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ in Galatians chapter 5 he says as follows in verse 24 especially those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires if we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires now there are many

Christians that find a problem with that because sometimes you'll find people saying well I don't find myself yet having actually completely put the workings of the flesh and sinned to death so I can't be a Christian that's not what Paul is saying Paul is saying this is something you're engaged in every day something you're engaged in as your life goes on something you're engaged in as you come to know more and more of the truth of God and of fellowship with Christ and your fellow Christians it's something that you're engaged in and you want to be engaged in more and more it's something that you're engaged in the more you find out about sin and what sin is like and what sin is like in God's sight you pray Lord by your Spirit help me today to crucify the flesh to put to death the works of the flesh to deal with this inward motion of my heart even though I am one of yours even though you've saved me or perhaps you might say because you've saved me I need to deal with this

I need to live a life that's honoring to you a life that will more and more lead me into the ways of sanctification what he's saying is if you do this you will live if you by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body you will live and it doesn't just mean that you will live after you've left this world and the life of heaven by no means is that left out of it but it's not confined to that I think the thought of the apostle is if you do this then your ongoing Christian believing life will be life you will have life in terms of all the benefits that God gives to his people the rich and full and satisfying life of fellowship with Christ of the Lord's favor in your soul of comfort from him of assurance of peace of all of these things to do with God's presence and you could add to that all the other things the Bible tells you that's the life that's the rich the full life that we can have and should have in Christ

John Owen again if I can quote him puts it this way the vigor and power and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh that's how he put it the vigor the power and comfort of your spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh so one of the questions we've got to ask ourselves if we don't have that sense of God's nearness of God's favor of God's comfort in our souls we have to ask ourselves is it in any way possible that it's because I'm not mortifying the flesh is it because I'm not dealing with my sinful appetites the way I should is this the reason I'm not enjoying God the end for which I was created remember that's what the catechism says the very first one what is the chief end of man you could translate that for what reason was man created by God man's chief end is to glorify God yeah but there's more than that and to enjoy him forever and for me to enjoy my God

[58 : 26] I need to crucify I need to mortify the deeds of the body I cannot expect to have the favor of God enjoyed in my soul if I'm not engaged in what Paul is telling me here putting to death the deeds of the body and if I am doing that I'm assured that I will live I will live because it will be for me part of the process of my sanctification under God under the directorship of the spirit more and more leading me to become like Christ himself two questions are you in Christ are you saved are you under the directorship of the Holy Spirit is your life the way it's always been since you came into the world has it changed at all are you still led by sin even quietly even in a way that perhaps isn't obvious but is known to yourself friend here again

God is saying to you to be found in Christ to give your life over to him so that he will take control and give you all that you were designed to have and to enjoy as one of God's creatures second question

Christian myself included after all Paul included himself in this we are debtors he didn't exempt himself from what he was saying to the Romans Christian myself are we tonight engaged in killing our sins daily is it our concern to put to death the deeds of the body the workings of the flesh if so we are assured we shall live God will give us his assurance and comfort that we are his that we are his adopted children that we have heaven to expect at the end of our journey let's pray almighty God we thank you for the extensive teaching of your word on the life that you have given to your people to follow and to see through to the end of their course in this life we thank you Lord for your Holy Spirit we thank you for the power of your Holy Spirit power greater than the power of sin itself a power that has brought all things into being that exist in the creation that we are part of a power that has raised us to life from the deadness of our sin a power that enables us to face our sin and to seek Lord to mortify it and put it to death day by day help us we pray to do so help us by your Holy Spirit to follow through with the teaching of your word and these great issues that are so much a part of your people's experience and grant your blessing Lord today to the gospel wherever it has been proclaimed and in our own midst as well we ask that may bear fruit that will be unto eternal life and to the praise and glory of your great name we pray in Jesus name Amen let's sing a conclusion now from

Psalm 119 page 157 to tune before the throne Psalm 119 verses 1 to 8 blessed are those of blameless ways who live according to God's word blessed are those who keep his laws who with their whole heart seek the Lord they keep themselves from doing wrong by walking in his perfect ways you have established laws for us that are to be obeyed always that opening section verses 1 to 8 to God's praise verse 1 blessed are those of blameless ways who live according to God's word blessed are those who leave his laws who with their whole heart seek the Lord Lord they keep themselves from doing wrong by walking in his perfect ways you have established laws for us that are to be obeyed always that are to be obeyed always that are to be obeyed always that are to be obeyed always oh that thy ways were steadfast Lord our commands I would not feel disgrace or shame I praise you with an upright heart as you're just all suffered by me all your defeats

[64 : 22] I will obey do not forsake me after me do not forsake me after me I'll go to the door to my right this evening now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always Amen