

Killing Sin
Mars Hill Church | West Seattle
Preached by Pastor Adam Sinnett
June 15th, 2008

Be killing sin or it will be killing you.

Puritan John Owen

¹³ *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. **Romans 8:13***

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ *Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **Hebrews 12:1-3***

Q: What are 'weights & sin'?

- *Works of the flesh (**Gal 5:19, 1 Cor 3:3**)*
- *Practices of the "old self" (**Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9**)*
- *Unfruitful works of darkness (**Eph 5:11**)*
- *Whatever is earthly in you (**Col 3:5**)*
- *Acts that are earthly, unspiritual, demonic (**James 3:15**)*
- *Deeds of the body (**Rom 8:13**)*

Q: What are some of these things?

Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking, deceit, passion, evil desire, anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying, selfish ambition, disorder, every vile practice, boasting, being false to the truth, evil thoughts, murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and things like these.

Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 3:3; Eph 5:3-14; Col 3:5-10; Jas 3:14-16; Mt 15:18-20

In other words, we are to "lay aside" any and all unbelieving, hostile, insubordinate affections, cares, and concerns for the body, life and this world that hinder, encumber, weigh us down and prevent us from running with endurance the race that is set before us as we make it our aim to be with and like Jesus.

Q: Where do these things come from?

Mt 12:34, 15:18-20; Mk 7:21-23

Q: What should Christians do with 'weights' and 'sin'?

- *Lay aside (**Heb 12:1**, lit. stop, put away, get rid of)*
- *Cast off (**Rom 13:12**)*
- *Put away (**1 Pet 2:1; Eph 4:25; Col 3:8; Jas 1:21**)*
- *Put off (**Eph 4:22**)*
- *Make no provision for (**Rom 13:14**)*
- *Cut it off, throw away, tear it out (**Mt.5:30,18:8;Mk 9:42-50**)*
- *Put to death – KILL! (**Col 3:5; Rom 8:13**, lit. execute, stop completely)*

¹³ *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. **Romans 8:13***

Our indwelling sin (aka our flesh) is described as our “old self” (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), literally a person that is our enemy that must be killed. All of the deeds of the flesh outlined above come from within, from the “old self”. Thus, the power, strength and blood supply of the “old self” must continually and consistently be cut off, strangled and put to death. In so doing sin is habitually weakened through constant fighting and frequent success. This is something that we are to be about every day and continue to do until we see Jesus face to face. In killing sin “by the Spirit” we *live*, affecting not only our eternal destiny but the fruitfulness of our life here.

“The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.” Owen, p47

“The mortification of indwelling sin remaining in our mortal bodies, that it may not have life and power to bring forth the works or deeds of the flesh, is the constant duty of believers.” Owen, p49

“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.” Owen, p47

Q: What does “by the Spirit” mean?

⁵ *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 minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ 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. **Romans 8:5-7***

Q: What are the “things of the Spirit”?

¹³ *And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. **1 Cor 2:13-14 (cf. 2 Peter 1:20,21)***

Therefore, according to 1 Cor 2:14, the “things of the Spirit” (this is the only other place in the NT where this specific phrase occurs) are the words given to the Apostle Paul by the Spirit which we have in the NT, specifically, and the entire Bible, generally. If we overlay this verse with Romans 8:13 we get: **Kill sin by the Word of God**. This corresponds to how the Word of God is described in Eph 6:17, namely as the “*sword of the spirit.*” What better instrument to “*put to death the deeds of the body*” with than the “*sword of the spirit*”?

¹³ *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. **Eph 6:13-18***

Therefore, the question is raised, how do we put all of this together? How do we yield the sword of the Spirit in killing sin in our lives?

Q: How, then, do we put this into practice?

² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? **Gal 3:2-6**

I think Paul gives us a big clue in Galatians 3:2-6. In 3:5, Paul asks the Galatians how supplies of the Spirit and God’s miracle working power is made available to us – is it by “works of the law” or by “hearing with faith”? The answer: **hearing with faith**. Paul says this is always how the Spirit works, beginning with our conversion (Gal 3:2,3; cf. Rom 10:17). Is it any wonder that is how the Spirit continues to function in our lives? (cf. Col 2:6) We are freshly supplied with the Spirit and his power by hearing and trusting it to be true, in faith. Therefore, if we go back to Romans 8:13, we kill sin by the Spirit, by setting our minds on the things of the Spirit (Rom 8:5), which is the Word of God (1 Cor 2:14), and hearing with faith (Gal 3:5). These aren’t general, amorphous, fuzzy thoughts about God, but concrete words from the Word that we believe and utterly bank our lives on.

Are we on the right track here? I think so for three reasons. First, this is exactly what we see Jesus doing in the wilderness before he begins his ministry. He kills the temptations of the lust of the flesh (Satan challenging Jesus to turn stones into bread), the boastful pride of life (Satan challenging Jesus to prove he is the Son of God by jumping off the temple) and lust of the eyes (Satan offering Jesus all the kingdoms of the world) in the wilderness by wielding the sword of the Spirit, in faith. (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13) Second, the author of Hebrews (Heb 3) and Paul (1 Cor 10) warn their audiences against the danger of merely hearing without combining it with faith. “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion...” (Heb 3:7.8) Third, we see that this is exactly what Adam and Eve *failed* to do in the Garden, placing their faith in the words of Satan over those of God. (Gen 3:1-6)

Summary: We kill sin, by the Spirit, by hearing and trusting the Word of God.

Examples:

Dt 8:3 Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Ps 46:1,2 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear through the earth gives way...

Ps 107:9 For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

Ps 127:1 ¹ Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

Isa 40:29-31 ²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. ³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹ but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Ps 27:4

⁴ One thing have I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to inquire in his temple.

Ps 34:4

⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.
⁵ Those who look to him are radiant,
and their faces shall never be ashamed.

Ps 84:10

¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God

than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Ps 118:5,6

⁵ Out of my distress I called on the LORD;
the LORD answered me and set me free.

⁶ The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.

What can man do to me?

Jer 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Lk 14:11 ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Rom 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom 8:28 ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Rom 8:31 If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rom 10:13 ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

1 Cor 6:19,20 You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

2 Cor 1:20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.

2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

2 Cor 5:15 ¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

2 Cor 5:17 ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Gal 2:20 ²⁰ It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Eph 2:19-20 ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone

Eph 3:20-21 ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Php 1:6 ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Php 4:6-7 ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Php 4:13 ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Php 4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

2 Tim 1:7 ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

2 Tim 4:18 ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Heb 4:16 ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

James 4:10 ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

1 Pet 4:1,2 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

1 Pe 5:6-7 ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

1 John 1:9 ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 5:18 ¹⁸ We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

Rev 22:20 ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

“Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it while you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.” Owen, p50

Recommended Reading:

Overcoming Sin & Temptation | Three Classic Works by John Owen, edited by Kapic & Taylor
The Enemy Within | Straight Talk About the Power and Defeat of Sin, by Kris Lundgaard