



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

56 – The Mortification of Sin

Announcements:

2/1 @7:00 -

Prayer

2/2 @6:30 -

Grace Group

2/5 @8:30 -

Sunday School

2/7 @6:30 -

Women's Bible Study

2/26 @5:30 -

Joint Service With La
Luz Bible Church

ICE BREAKER: Do you have any phrases or proverbs that are your “rules for life”?

READ: Matthew 18:5-9

Of all the controversial things that Jesus said, this just may be the most controversial. Did Jesus just say that those who follow him should disfigure themselves? Are we really supposed to cut off our own hands? This seems barbaric at best. In fact, this is so out there we would probably call someone crazy if they really tried to follow what Jesus said here. But I would argue that this type of thinking is really our problem. I used to approach this passage as if Jesus was speaking purely in hyperbole. I even have joked in the past, if I were to do this all it would really accomplish is making me a left-handed sinner! What this misses is the dead seriousness of what Jesus is trying to teach us here. At the heart of it all lies a thought that we don't often hear of, the *mortification* of sin.

In one of his more approachable books (honestly, not saying much.. But it's a good one!), *The Mortification of Sin in the Life of the Believer*, John Owen lays out the importance of the idea of mortification of sin. He writes: “you must be killing sin [literally this is what mortification means!], or it will be killing you!”. I believe that this thought is often what is missing in our lives as we pursue righteousness. We get so caught up in the idea of salvation apart from works that we neglect the thoughts of Being holy as he is holy (1 Peter 1:16). So today I would like to dive into the idea of the mortification of sin.

We must start with a sort of thought 0.5. Everything that we will talk about in this study is applicable ONLY to those who are saved by Christ. To undertake or really even attempt these things apart from the work of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is impossible at best and sinfully prideful at worst. Apart from Christ we are slaves to sin, sin rules and reigns in our lives, we are under a curse and unable to ever do anything to please God. If we understand the battle against sin in our lives in terms of *mortification* we must first understand that it is us who are dead before being made alive in Christ. BUT THEN, when made alive in Christ we are empowered to not just battle sin, but triumph in his power. That is our hope and promise as we follow his commands.

DISCUSS: What are some consequences of thinking we can triumph over sin apart from the work of Christ? Why should we be quick to point these out?

But then, once we are in Christ, we can take the next steps, which simply put is warring against sin in our lives. Classically the idea of the mortification of sin means a twofold way of killing the sin in our hearts. The first is understanding the weight and the vileness of our sins, and truly repenting of them. I grew up in a denominational milieu that probably overstated repentance. It was (most likely unintentionally) presented as if I turned away from sins then God would *have* to forgive me. But truly to understand repentance and our ability to kill the sin in our lives we must understand it as something that happens at and then after our salvation. I can turn away from my sins only because I have been made alive and given the power to defeat them. I can conquer sins only because I am a “new creation”. I have the desire and ability to turn from these sins because I have been given a new heart with the Law of Christ written upon it. But then knowing that, turn away and fight the sins in my life I must. In other words, In the fight to kill sin in my life I must give it no stronghold, and resist it and turn from it!

DISCUSS: Why do we often overlook repentance as something that happens AFTER salvation? Why is this important for us?

However, what this passage presents to us is the second portion of the war on sin. WE must root out even the OPPORTUNITY for sin in our lives (in my opinion, this is the thought Jesus is after when he says to cut off your hand!). When trying to get through to a bunch of teenagers I would use the following example. Imagine that you are on Main street and you DO NOT want to end up on University. If you are driving down Solano then you have ample opportunity to change direction and turn off to the left or the right. But if you hop on I-25 driving south you have exactly one chance to not end up at University. The first step of mortification is realizing how important it is to NOT end up on University, to the point where you will make an illegal u-turn on the Interstate to avoid it if you must. But the second step is deciding before you even get in the car to never get on the interstate at all. Sin lies at our door all the time, why do we often make it “easy” to fall into sin? Why place ourselves into positions and times where sin can trip us up. If we were to truly understand the mortification of sin we would realize this is a battle to the death, and do all that we could to win the fight!

DISCUSS: What are some ways that we often allow sins easy access to our hearts? How can we “Go on the offensive”?