

### **Romans (39): Putting to Death the deeds of the Body (2)**

Last Lord's Day we began to address the paragraph of **Romans 8:12-17**. We did not advance very far, for although we had wanted to cover the meaning and implications of at least verses 12 and 13, we only began to do so. But because the lessons(s) of these few verses are of such critical importance to us, we do not want to pass over them lightly. Let us read again the passage:

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>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!" <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>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.

As we affirmed last week, this paragraph teaches us that...

#### **I. Our Sanctification is essential to our Salvation (8:12f).**

God has not saved us that we continue to live as "debtors" to the flesh, that is, to pay a debt to sin by serving sin for our debt to sin was paid fully by Jesus Christ. Rather God has redeemed us through Jesus Christ so that we may live as ones that God has made us, even His own sons (and daughters).

In **verse 13** Paul declares a further reason why we are not debtors to live in order to sin. ***"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."*** All true Christians by God's grace fulfill the second condition set forth here: Those who live governed and empowered by the Holy Spirit so that they live righteously, while defeating sin in their lives, they will live before God both in this life and in the world to come.

Paul was addressing justified persons in these verses. He was writing to Christians. The Lord gives His people grace enabling them to defeat sin in their lives and to live according to righteousness. Our ***faith*** is one of the chief means that God has given us to overcome sin in our lives. "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith" (1 John 5:4). In faith we humble ourselves before the Lord and trust Him to deliver us from our sins that fight against us. James wrote of this life of faith:

Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup>Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:7ff)

And once again, this must be done daily, because sin is continually at work in us. If you neglect to employ the means of grace that God has available for you, you will be overcome by sin. And in the end, you will not live.

Here are the words of exhortation from the puritan, **Thomas Manton**, which I was unable to rehearse last Lord's Day.

The daily course is needful, because sin is at continual work in our hearts; and as soon as a Christian neglects his soul, the effects do soon appear. In this sense, a Christian must die daily, that is, to his sins and corruptions; he must still watch, and strive, and get some advantage against them, by every prayer he maketh to God, every act of receiving the Lord's Supper, or hearing the word; it is his constant task.<sup>1</sup>

Consider the sad consequence of letting sin alone. When sin is not mortified, it groweth outrageous, and never ceaseth acting till it hath exposed us to shame before God, men, and angels; or hardeneth us in a carnal, careless course. Lusts let alone end in gross sins, and gross sins in a casting off all religion. Love of pleasures let alone, will end in drunkenness and uncleanness; envy, in murder and violence. Judas allowed his covetousness, and that brought him to betray his master; Gehazi was first blasted with covetousness, then with asking a bribe to God's dishonour, then with leprosy, and so became a shame and burden to himself; Ananias and Sapphira were taken off by a sudden judgment. The devil loveth by lust to draw us into sin; and by sin to shame; and by shame to horror and despair. Sin is no tame thing. But do the people of God run into such notable excesses and disorders? Yes, when they let sin alone, and discontinue the exercise of mortification; witness David, that run into lust and blood; and Peter into curses and execrations; Solomon into sensuality and idolatry. Old sins long laid asleep may awaken again, and hurry us strangely into mischief and inconvenience...

Consider also the abundance of sin of all kinds that remaineth with the regenerate, or those that are called to grace. I shall evidence that by some scriptures: 1 Pet. 2:1, 'Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking;' to whom is this spoken? The word *wherefore* biddeth us look back; when we look back, we find it was spoken to those that were called, effectually called, and born again; yea, those that had made some progress in mortification, that had purified their hearts to the obedience of the truth, 1 Pet. 1:22. Who would think that the seeds of so much evil should lurk in their hearts? but alas! It is so. They are in part envious, malicious, hypocritical to the last; and unless they shall keep mortifying, these sins will get the mastery of them, and bewray themselves to their loss and prejudice, and God's dishonour. See another place: Col. iii. 5, 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.' You would think all this were spoken to loose and ungoverned men, that have not the least tincture and show of religion. No; it is spoken of those whose life was hidden with God in Christ, men acquainted with spiritual things, and brought under the power of the life of Christ. We foolishly imagine that such should only be told of the remainders of unbelief, or spiritual pride, or such like evils as are very remote from public infamy and scandal; but the Spirit of God is wiser than we; and knoweth our hearts, and the secret workings of them, better than we do ourselves; and it is better these sins should be laid open in the warnings of the word, and discovered to us, rather than in us, by the prevalency of a temptation.

## II. The manner and means of our sanctification (Rom. 8:13).

The apostle gives us the manner and the means by which our sanctification may be realized by the Lord's people. Through faith in Christ alone, Christians were justified—pardoned and righteous, they are beloved of God. But although we are justified before God through faith alone, we have the responsibility to be sanctified by God. The privilege of one brings the responsibility of the other. Sanctification is an absolute and essential experience that must occur in every Christian's life. God has appointed the end, which is "life." But He has also appointed the way to life, which is our sanctification. Sin must die, or we will die. The two cannot continue to live. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:12f, KJV).

"Sins prove mortal, if they be not mortified. Either sin must die, or the sinner... It is better sin should be condemned, than that you should be condemned"<sup>2</sup>

In the mortifying of our sin, we might first consider the seat of the matter, *our own hearts*. What is it that we love? Do we love God and righteousness, or do we love sin? The root lies here and we must pull our sin out

---

<sup>1</sup> Manton, vol. 12, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 67/

root and all. It might be said that the source of all of our sinning is self-love. It is because people love themselves rather God; they love sin rather than righteousness. The only way that this is corrected is through the new birth, when God implants a love for Himself that is greater than a love for sin. But sin still resides in us. What we must do, then, is to enhance our love for God so that our love of sin will wane. Those who are unsaved, love themselves supremely. They are self-lovers, self-pleasers. But those who are spiritual love God and desire to please Him. Our love for God is the great means by which our love for self and sin is diminished. **2 Corinthians 5: 14 and 15** read:

*For the love of Christ compels us*, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

**A. We should resolve, therefore, to love Christ more and more.** The more we love Christ the less we will love sin. How do we grow in our love for Christ? We do so through our meditation upon Christ, His life and His death that was given for us. Our love for Him will grow as we are more affected by His love for us. Later in this passage Paul accentuated the love of Christ for His people:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors *through him who loved us*. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us *from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*. (Rom. 8:35-39)

We may love Christ more by reflecting, meditating upon His sufferings on our behalf. He suffered for us in order to save us from, separate us from our sin and sins that would have condemned us forever. Meditation upon Christ involves time and effort on our part.

Meditation is a spiritual discipline that should be a regular feature of our lives as Christians.<sup>3</sup> Growth in spiritual maturity will be directly linked to your practice of Christian meditation. We may see this is the case from Paul’s exhortation to Timothy.

<sup>11</sup>These things command and teach. <sup>12</sup>Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. <sup>13</sup>Till I come, *give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine*. <sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. <sup>15</sup>*Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all*. <sup>16</sup>Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. *Continue* in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. **1 Timothy 4:11-16**

And so, what specifically is spiritual meditation? First, we must not associate meditation that is commonly practiced by those who espouse the eastern religions. We might have a wrong impression of meditation because of our aversion to the false religions of Buddhism and Hinduism that advocate what they call meditation, or the popular practice of yoga they advocate. Buddhists practice meditation. Hindus do also. Muslims meditate. Christians seem not to do so. Proponents of meditation of this eastern mystic type seek *to empty the mind in order to try and become detached from the world and connected to what they believe is a god-spirit in the universe*. The meditation described in the Bible does not try and empty the mind, but rather the effort *to fill the mind and focus the mind on the truth of God*. **Thomas Watson** (17<sup>th</sup> c.) defined the Christian practice of meditation as:

A holy exercise of the mind whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and do seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> There is a wonderful chapter on the practice of meditation entitled, “The Puritan Practice of Meditation” in Joel Beeke, **Puritan Reformed Spirituality** (Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), pp. 73ff.

This is what Paul had commanded Timothy to do; this is what God commands you to do as a Christian: ***“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them.”***

The Bible says a great deal about this subject. **David** in **Psalm 1** wrote of meditation. We had mentioned Psalm 1 recently in order to see the contrast between the manner that a Christian lives and the manner the unconverted man lives. But there David also speaks directly to the subject of spiritual meditation.

<sup>1</sup>Blessed is the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;  
<sup>2</sup>***But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.***  
<sup>3</sup>He shall be like a tree  
Planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.

When God was preparing Joshua to assume leadership of Israel upon the death of Moses, He said to Joshua:

<sup>7</sup>Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>***This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.*** For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

We see that Joshua was to meditate upon the Word of God so that he would be able to observe it, or obey it. Here we see one of the important elements of biblical meditation.

One of the times that we should give ourselves to this privilege and duty is on the Lord's Day. **Thomas Gouge**, a puritan, wrote, “Had you ever tasted of the sweetness of this duty of Divine Meditation, you would find little time for vain talk, and idle discourses, especially on the Lord's Day.”<sup>5</sup> **Richard Baxter** wrote, “What fitter day to ascend to heaven than that on which our Lord did arise from the earth, and fully triumph over death and hell, and take possession of heaven for us?”<sup>6</sup>

There are numerous subjects that may be chosen from Scripture that may be the subject of meditation.<sup>7</sup> But with view to our sanctification the subject at the top of the list should be our contemplation of Jesus Christ and with particular attention to His love for us in His suffering and death for our sins. **John Owen** (17<sup>th</sup> c.) wrote,

“If I have observed anything by experience, it is this: a man may take a measure of his growth and decay in grace according to his thoughts and meditations upon the person of Christ, and the glory of Christ's kingdom, and of his love.”<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Joel Beeke composed a list of subjects that the Puritans had expressly identified as topics for meditation. This list is included at the end of these notes.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 90.

This matter of meditation is alluded to in the passage of Romans 8. **Verse 5** reads,

<sup>5</sup>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*.

But not only should we **resolve to love Christ more and more**, and therefore meditate upon Him and His sufferings for us, but...

**B. We should resolve to understand our sin and proneness to sin more and more.**

Much strife and hardship come forth from our own propensity to sin. James wrote, “

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. (James 4:1f).

Sin brings us to experience misery and distress. It divides people from one another who may have once professed love for one another. It sets a man on course for misery both in this life and in the world to come. We must purge these from our hearts or Christ will not dwell richly within us.

And how does the Christian put to death the deeds of the body?

**C. We are to put to death the deeds of the body “by the Spirit.”**

The Holy Spirit is both the agent through whom God sanctifies His people, but He is also the instrument through which His people put to death their sins. The risen and enthroned Lord Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to His church in order to enable them to fulfill His purposes in the world. The Holy Spirit enables believers to say “no” to sin and “yes” to righteousness. The Holy Spirit removes the temptation to sin when that temptation comes upon us. We are to ask the Lord, or even ask the Holy Spirit Himself, to remove us from temptation or to remove temptation from us.

We are to yield to the Holy Spirit, seeking to trust Him, to rely upon Him to empower us to fight against sin in our lives. To the degree that we are filled with the Holy Spirit, will be to the degree that the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be produced and evidenced in us.

<sup>16</sup>But I say, *walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh*. <sup>17</sup>For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal. 5:16-25)

We are to pray that the enthroned Lord Jesus would give us fresh manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray for the Father to give them the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said that the Father would give “good things” to His people, with particular view to the Father giving the Holy Spirit.

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>11</sup>If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then,

being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!*" (Luke 11:9-12)

Here we see a contrast drawn between our earthly fathers and our heavenly Father. **A human father is first described** (11:11f). A human father would not be so cruel as *to deceive* or harm his children by supposing to give them what they asked but giving them in its place something that was harmful to them. But then our **heavenly Father is contrasted** (11:13). You should not think God is anything but more willing to give everything good and needful to His children who ask Him. Then our Lord declares the promise **that the Father will give the Spirit**. What are the good things that the Father bestows upon His children? His Holy Spirit. And with the Spirit come all the graces of God that He imparts to His children--faith, love, hope, patience, endurance, mercy, and goodness. All of these things, in fact, all good things that come to us do so through the operation of the Spirit of God.

*The Lord, in teaching His disciples to pray, taught them to pray for the Holy Spirit to be given to them!* Now here is one of those passages that is treated by some--even many-- as though it does not apply to the Christian. It is said, "Jesus gave these instructions before the cross, before the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, these words, therefore, do not apply to believers today. **C. I. Scofield**, and the editors of the **New Scofield Bible** took this position:

"It is evident that none of the disciples, with the possible exception of Mary of Bethany, asked for the Spirit in the faith of this promise. It was a new and staggering thing to a Jew that, in advance to the fulfillment of Joel 2:28,29, all might receive the Spirit. Mary alone of the disciples understood Christ's repeated declaration concerning His own death and resurrection (John 12:3-7). Save Mary, not one of the disciples but Peter, and he only in the great confession (Mt. 16:16), manifested a spark of spiritual intelligence till after the resurrection of Christ and the impartation of the Spirit (John 20:22; Acts 2:1-4). To go back to the promise of Luke 11:13, is to forget Pentecost, and to ignore the truth that now every believer has the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8. 9, 15; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 2:20,27). (Scofield, p. 1090)

They say, in other words, "These words of Jesus do not apply for the Christian. Here is another quote that I find amazing:

What does it mean to be Spirit-filled? Let me give you a short theology lesson. We will call it theology of the Spirit-filled life. When you were saved, the moment you received Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live within you. There is no Christian who does not possess the Holy Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9 cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; 12:12-13). Yet it is amazing how many Christians think they do not have the Holy Spirit.

I have sat in church and heard sincere people pray, "O, God, send Your Spirit," and have thought to myself, No, He is here. He is here! I have heard people pray, "God give me more of Your Spirit," as if He came in doses.

The Holy Spirit is a person; He lives within you. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" (1 Cor. 6:19) So many times we ask for what we already have! We pray for the Holy Spirit, and He is already here.

Have you ever analyzed your prayers? You pray, "God, give me more love for so and-so." The Bible says the "love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. 5:5).

You say, "God, I need more grace." God says that the grace He has already given you is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).

You cry, "O Lord, I need more strength." The Bible says you "can do all things through Christ" who strengthens you (Phil. 4:13).

"O God, guide me," you say. And He is thinking, "I'm trying. Why don't you follow?"

"God, I need power," you cry. In fact, you have had power since the Holy Spirit came upon you (Acts 1:8).<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur, *Found: God's Will*, pp. 18f)

The conclusion to this kind of thinking is that you can disregard the teaching of the Lord to His disciples here in Luke 11:13. You should not ask for the Father to give you the Spirit of God, through Whom comes these good things.

I have some serious problems with this position:

1. It dismisses a portion of the Scriptures as not applying to you. But the Gospel of Luke was written by a Christian and was circulated among Christians and surely, the contents were regarded by them as having binding authority upon them.

2. It presumes that you are not in need of present, recurring manifestations of the Spirit's presence and power in your life; after all, you have already been given all you need. Now, it is certainly true that each Christian has the Holy Spirit indwelling him; His presence is ever with us. But His power is not always upon us. You can grieve the Spirit so that the sensible presence of the Spirit is absent, the power of the Spirit is absent. The Scriptures teach that there are times when we need to be in prayer that God will give us fresh manifestations of His Spirit so that His presence and power be experienced among us a fresh. And I think that one can do this and not to "forget Pentecost."

Are you not in need of fresh manifestations of His presence and fresh bestowal of His Grace to stand day by day? Do you not need patience, encouragement, boldness, enlightenment, and power to do His commands? Is not the prayer that God fill us with His Spirit the same as give us your Spirit? I would think so, and I would suggest that every good (spiritual) gift only comes to us through the means of the Spirit. It is perfectly proper to ask God to give you His Spirit, of course recognizing, that He already indwells you.

Here are the words of *Matthew Henry*:

The encouragement he gives us to hope that we shall speed in this prayer: Your *heavenly Father will give*. It is in *his power* to give the Spirit; he has all good things to bestow, wrapped up in that one; but that is not all, it is in *his promise*, the gift of the *Holy Ghost* is in the covenant, Acts ii. 33, 38, and it is here inferred from parents' readiness to *supply* their children's needs, and gratify *their desires*, when they are natural and proper: If the child ask for a *serpent*, or a *scorpion*, the father, in kindness, will deny him, but not if he ask for what is *needful*, and will be nourishing. When God's children ask for the Spirit, they do, in effect, ask for *bread*; for the Spirit is the staff of life; nay, he is the Author of the soul's life. If our earthly parents, though evil, be yet so kind, if they, though weak, be yet so knowing, that they not only give, but give with discretion, give what is best, in the best manner and time, much more will our *heavenly Father*, who infinitely excels the fathers of our flesh both in wisdom and goodness, give us his *Holy Spirit*. If earthly parents be willing to lay out for the education of their children, to whom they design to leave their estates, much more will our heavenly Father give the spirit of sons to all those whom he has predestinated to the inheritance of sons. (vol. 5, p. 695)

And here are the words of *Charles Spurgeon*:

But it appears plainly enough from the text that *this Holy Spirit is to be given in answer to prayer*. Did not we hear some time ago from certain *wise* brethren that we were never to pray for the Spirit? I think I heard it said often, "We have the Holy Spirit, and therefore we are not to pray for it." Like that other declaration of certain of the same brotherhood, that we have pardon of sin, and are not to pray for it, just as if we were never to pray for what we have! If we have life we are to pray that we have it more abundantly. If we have pardon in one respect we are to ask for a fuller sense of *it*; and if we have the Holy Spirit so that we are quickened, and saved, we do not ask for him in that capacity, but we ask for His power in other directions, and for His grace in other forms. I do not go before God now and say, "Lord, I am a dead sinner, quicken me by Thy Spirit," for I trust I am quickened of His Spirit; but being quickened I now cry, "Lord, let not the life thou hast given me ebb down till it becomes very feeble, but give me of Thy Spirit that the life within me may become strong and mighty, and may subdue all the power of death within my members, that I may put forth the vigor and energy which come from thyself through the Spirit." Oh you that have the Spirit, you are the very men to pray that you may experience more of His matchless operations and gracious influences, and in all the benign sanctity of His indwelling may seek that yet more and more you may know

Him. You have this as your encouragement, that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Ever since certain brethren gave up asking for the Holy Spirit they have not had it (Him), and they have gone aside into many inventions; if they will not ask they shall not have, but be it yours and mine to wait humbly and patiently upon the Lord that He may daily give us of His Spirit....

No miracles do we seek, but all the spiritual uplifting which the Holy Spirit gave to men of old we need, and He can give it to us still.

Though He will not reveal new truths--we do not want that He should, for we have already the complete gospel revealed--He will bring home the old truths to our souls and make them potent upon our consciences, and upon our lives, and this is what we want...

We should all pray throughout the day and onward, that God will give to His churches more and more of His Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

We have before us in Romans 8 a task that is impossible for us; we are to become sanctified. This is not possible to any but those who are empowered by the Spirit of God. You cannot do the things which are set forth apart from God's Spirit resting upon you and empowering you to do them. And for His presence and power to be manifested in you, you are going to have to pray that the Father give Him to you whenever the occasion arises, and even before it arises. You can only live before Him as He, the Spirit of God empowers you to do so. Do not fail to ask of the Father to give you this good gift. For Paul wrote, "if *by the Spirit* you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

The Holy Spirit will enable us to reflect upon Jesus Christ and our reflection upon Christ will enable us to deal with our sin. When we reflect upon Christ crucified, we are reminded to recall that we have crucified our own passions and lusts, for "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). But even those sins that we have previously defeated may regain some of their former appeal and therefore strength against us. We should be watchful for ourselves and guard ourselves especially with respect to those sins that have easily preyed upon us in the past.

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." (Heb. 12:1f).

Even little temptations to sin should be seen as great dangers to us. Esau was willing to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew at a time of his weakness and lack of concern for his privilege and position. So too, we should be attentive to those times when it seems that we are being assaulted by little threats. That is the idea behind the wise man's statement. "Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom" (Song of Solomon 2:15).

We should be responsive to God when the Holy Spirit prompts us to deal with our sin. Some are quick to marginalize or dismiss the preacher because they either are unconcerned with what he says or they desire to discredit what the Holy Spirit may be saying through him. They are like Ahab who said of Micaiah the son of Imlah, "I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kings 22:8). And so it is, some hate the preacher because they perceive that he has nothing good to say of them or to them. There is something's desperately defective and deficient of one who cannot stand to hear the Word of God taught or proclaimed in truth.

We are to trust the Holy Spirit to enable us to turn away from the allurements that sin has for us. We are to pray as the psalmist, "Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in Your ways" (Psa. 119:37).

More specifically, how does the Holy Spirit enable us to become increasingly sanctified? **(1) He instructs us of our true condition and of the sin that dwells within us and that is in need of cleansing.** The Holy Spirit is our *Teacher* in sanctification. Sin is a terrible evil, but we do not always see it as sin. When the Holy Spirit anoints our eyes, we are then able to see it clearly. The prophet Jeremiah wrote of the experience chastised Israel through its exile in Babylon. Here the name of Israel that is used is Ephraim:

---

<sup>10</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pilgrim Publications), vol. 16, pp. 620-623.

<sup>18</sup>I have heard Ephraim grieving, “You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the LORD my God. <sup>19</sup>For after I had turned away, I relented, and ***after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded***, because I bore the disgrace of my youth.” (Jer. 31:18ff).

And so, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and causes us to relent of having committed it. Ezekiel describes this work of the Holy Spirit in the ones who are in relationship with God through the promised new covenant. In Ezekiel 36 the prophet used language of God’s future blessing in words that ancient agrarian culture would have understood and desired:

<sup>27</sup>“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. <sup>28</sup>Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup>I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. <sup>30</sup>And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. <sup>31</sup>Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. <sup>32</sup>Not for your sake do I do this,” says the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!” (Ezek. 36:27-32)

When the Holy Spirit is working in the Lord’s people to cleanse them of their sin, He gives them first knowledge of their sins and a desire to be cleansed from those sins. And so, when we read that we are to put to death the deeds of the body “through the Spirit,” it means that we are to be instructed about our own sin and led to desire its remedy through the Holy Spirit.

(2) Secondly, and similarly, ***we are to look to the Holy Spirit to enable us or to empower us to live according to the will of God.*** The Holy Spirit is our ***Deliverer*** from sin in our sanctification. Jesus Christ is our King, who subdues our enemies, but He does so by imparting the Holy Spirit to us in order to defeat our spiritual enemies, that is, the sin that we struggle against.

My soul longs for You like a thirsty land.

<sup>7</sup>Answer me speedily, O LORD;

My spirit fails!

Do not hide Your face from me,

Lest I be like those who go down into the pit.

<sup>8</sup>Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,

For in You do I trust;

Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,

For I lift up my soul to You.

<sup>9</sup>Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies;

In You I take shelter.

<sup>10</sup>Teach me to do Your will,

For You are my God;

***Your Spirit is good.***

***Lead me in the land of uprightness.***

<sup>11</sup>***Revive (or, Quicken) me, O LORD, for Your name’s sake!***

***For Your righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble.***

<sup>12</sup>In Your mercy cut off my enemies,

And destroy all those who afflict my soul;

For I am Your servant.

In Old Testament days we read of God giving His Holy Spirit to come upon His people to empower them to vanquish their enemies. Similarly under the new covenant we call upon the Holy Spirit to enable us to defeat the power of sin that is within us that would defeat us.

(3) Thirdly, *we are to look to the Holy Spirit to encourage us in our struggle against sin as we look to the time of deliverance and victory over our sin.* In this way the Holy Spirit is our *Comforter* to assure us through this difficult work of sanctification. He confirms us in the love of God. “The great work of the Spirit is to reveal the love of God to us and to recover our love to God. This is a very important and even central aspect to our sanctification. We see it in our Romans 8 passage.

<sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>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!” <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>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.

The great work that the Spirit performs in the lives of His people is to assure them of the Father’s love for them as His children. The Holy Spirit assures us of our relationship with God. This is needful, for the way of sanctification for the believer is generally a path of great difficulty and suffering. What will sustain us through those times we “suffer with Him” will be the assurance of the love of God that the Holy Spirit imparts afresh to us.

This is the nature of the Christian life. We look to our God in our sanctification. We look to the Father who loves us as His children. We look to the Son who has redeemed us and who purifies us. We look to the Holy Spirit to illuminate us and enable us to live according to righteousness. This is the path that leads unto eternal life, as Paul expressed:

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>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.

And this is in accordance with what he wrote in Galatians 6:

<sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. <sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Gal. 6:17-19)

\*\*\*\*\*

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20f)

\*\*\*\*\*

## The Subjects of Meditation

by Joel Beeke

“The number after each entry represents the number of Puritan writers I found who called for meditation on that subject. This list follows the traditional loci of Reformed systematic theology.”

### *Prolegomena*

The sacred Word of God (3)  
The defense of Christianity (1)

### *Theology Proper*

The nature and attributes of God (7)  
The works and providences of God (7)  
The glory of God as man’s chief end (4)  
The majesty of God (3)  
The mercies of God (3)  
God as Creator (2)

### *Anthropology*

The sinfulness of sin and our personal sin (9)  
The corruption and deceitfulness of the heart (5)  
The fall in Adam and estrangement from God (4)  
The vanity of man (4)  
The value and the immortality of the soul (3)  
The frailty of the body (2)  
The uncertainty of earthly comforts (1)  
The sin of covetousness (1)  
The contrast between God and man (1)

### *Christology*

The passion and death of Christ (8)  
The love of Christ (5)  
The person of Christ (4)  
The mystery and wonder of the Gospel (4)  
The natures of Christ (2)  
The offices of Christ (2)  
The life of Christ (2)  
The states of Christ (1)

### *Soteriology and the Christian life*

The promises of God (7)  
Self-examination for experiential evidences of grace (5)  
The rich privileges of believers (3)  
The grace and person of the Holy Spirit (3)  
The benefits of faith (2)  
Sanctification (2)  
Prayer (2)  
The commandments of God  
The admonishments and threatenings of God (2)  
The danger of apostasy (1)  
The small number of the saved (1)  
Spiritual dangers (1)  
Love, joy, hope (1)  
The Sabbath (1)  
Self-denial (1)

### *Ecclesiology*

The ordinances of God (5)  
The Lord’s Supper (4)  
Baptism (2)  
Hearing and reading the Word (2)  
The joys and sorrows of the church (1)

### *Eschatology*

Heaven (10)  
Death (8)  
Judgment (7)  
Hell (7)  
Eternity (5)