

Dealing with Sin

1 John 3:4-10

Let me start out with a silly illustration to make a point. (WWF) In the one corner is **Mr. Cesspool**. He is for real and when others do battle with him the stakes are high. He is massive, with arms as big as his mid-section. He's unkempt and his personal hygiene is terrible. He has written on his shirt "triumphant sin." He loves to psyche out his opponent and he fights dirty. He's wicked, evil, greedy, and depraved. He's full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. He's a slanderer and a gossip (he talks about the others who are on the team). He's a God hater, arrogant and boastful. And to top it all off, he's always been disobedient to his parents. He's senseless, heartless, faithless, and ruthless. His trainer Satan is known as the father of lies who himself is the best there ever was with one exception, the opponents coach.

In the other corner is **Mr. Righteous**. He's well-conditioned and superior in strength and ability. He has written on his shirt "mortify sin." He's the opposite of his opponent in every way. He thinks differently, he has good hygiene and he's much more powerful. He's made every effort to display faith, and goodness, and knowledge (he knows the rules and lives by them). He's self-controlled, persevering, kind, and loving. He's wise and knows **Cesspool's** philosophy. He's wary and is not afraid to face his opponent to do battle. His trainer, Jesus Christ, has never experienced defeat and knows how to win. Whether or not **Mr. Righteous** wins depends on whether he listens to his trainer. His attitude toward righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness determines in many ways his ability to fight the good fight of faith that he was trained to do (**Romans 6:1-4**).

1 Timothy 6:11-12 *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

- This illustration depicts, in a lot of ways, the battle that occurs within us every day between our sin nature and our righteous nature. The battle is difficult and can take a toll on our spiritual wellbeing if we let it. Some don't make it. They lose their willingness to fight sin because they see it as either too powerful or too entertaining. Others are victorious because of their willingness to do battle and seek God's strength, wisdom, and guidance in the spiritual warfare believers are engaged in.
- John addresses some very important truths in **1 Jn. 3:4-10**
 1. Sin breaks the law and is called lawlessness (**vs. 4**)
 2. Christ appeared to take away our sins (**vs. 5**).
 3. In Christ there is no sin (**vs. 5**).
 4. A believer (those who live in him) cannot continue to sin (**vs. 6**).
 5. A Christian who does right is righteous (**vs. 7**).
 6. A person who continues to sin doesn't know Christ and is of the devil (**vs. 8**).
 7. Christ appeared to destroy the devil's work (**vs. 8b**).
 8. A Christian is born of God and cannot go on sinning (**vs. 9**).
 9. The children of the devil can be distinguished from the children of God by their fruit (**vs. 10**).
- John's key emphasis lies in the fact that a true child of God cannot go on sinning. This does not mean that Christian's can never sin again. It means that his or her life is no longer characterized by sin. It is no longer the principle a believer lives by, yet there is a constant struggle with it.

3:4-5 The major difference now is that sin is **no longer** our master, the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is. Therefore, our responsibility is to learn, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to put sin to death.

- Two texts show that it is an essential part of Christian living.

Col 3:1-5 *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **Put to death**, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (**NASB** Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to...)*

- A believer is commanded (obligated) to engage in a process of putting to death whatever sin besets them so that it no longer has an influence over their life.
- The **Aorist tense** of the verb **Nekroō** indicates that when dying to a sin is started, it will be successfully accomplished or brought to completion.

Nekroō *to make dead, to put to death, slay / to deprive of power, destroy the strength of.*

- The idea behind this verse indicates that the putting to death process must be put into action or started by us.

3:6 A believer is to make a continuous effort to put sin to death by the power of the Spirit. The Christian privilege makes putting sin to death an obligation. Paul states this in Romans 8:13.

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death (are putting to death by the Spirit) the misdeeds of the body, you will live, for those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

- *Put to death* here is in the **present tense** and implies a continuous ongoing action. Same tense as in **1 Jn. 3:6** *No one who lives in him keeps on sinning (continues to sin).*

thanatoō *to make to die i.e. destroy, render extinct. By death to be liberated from the bond of anything, literally to be made dead in relation to (something)*

- Put to death or mortify in Rom. 8 means that mortification must be continuous. *“If you keep on putting to death . . . you will live”.*

J.I. Packer sums it up this way: *“If you would make your calling and election sure by proving your faith, if you would so run as to obtain, so travel as to arrive, you must mortify sin. He who doth not kill sin in this way . . . takes no steps towards journey’s end.”*

3:7 A believer must learn to live by the power of Spirit to break free from sins debilitating influence.

Gal 5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

- It takes commitment. If we hope to make any progress in the pursuit of holiness, then commitment is essential. One reason we do not see more progress in holiness in our lives, is because we have for the most part lost sight of the necessity of commitment to God and His ways. God’s grace, love, power and understanding give us what we need to put to death besetting sin in our lives. His grace and mercy provide what we need to obey His commandments (**Jn. 14:21**).

- One pastor put it this way; *“When grace goes deep enough, it touches the deep rootedness of desire that causes me to want to please God . . . The best I can hope to do is challenge people to get into the presence of the Lord and let him be their teacher.”*
- Without a deep relationship with Christ, our attempt to put to death sin becomes our work instead of Christ’s and we are doomed to fail (**1 John 1:9; 2:1**).

3:8 Christian’s mortify sin by knowing the power behind sin and by seeing the need to engage in warfare against it. There are four steps involved:

Step one: It is of utmost importance that believers know their enemy. We must know its source and the power behind it.

- The starting point in putting to death sin is recognizing that we fight not merely sins, but **sin**.
- Christ tells us its source and gives us a list of its fruit in Mark 7:21-22.

Mark 7:21-22 *For from within, out of **men’s hearts**, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.*

3:8a Sin completely enslaves an unbeliever. He is at peace with it because it has won his heart. Even if he knows deep down that he’s entangled with its destructiveness, he doesn’t know how to escape its clutches.

3:8b Believers, on the other hand, are not at peace with sin. They have a change of heart toward it and set out to conquer it through Christ who destroyed the devil’s work.

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

- It doesn’t take long for us to realize that sin doesn’t totally die. We’ll be in battle with our sin nature until the day we die. Sin is our enemy; we are constantly in conflict with it.

Gal 5:17 *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*

Rom 7:19 *For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.*

1 Pet 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

- Sin seeks our ruin, and the only way to be victorious is to fight back.

3:9 **Step two** is to fight back. Our objective is to engage in aggressive warfare against the power of sin in our lives.

- In ignorance of one’s enemy one **fights blind**, and without a clear objective one **fights aimlessly**.

1 Cor. 9:26-27 *So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. No I discipline my body and make it my slave, ...*

- We must be clear on what we are trying to do. Our aim is “to put to death” sin. The reason we are to do so is because when we became born again God’s seed was implanted in our hearts.

NIV footnote states: *The picture is of human reproduction, in which the sperm (the Greek for seed is sperma) bears the life principle and transfers the paternal characteristics.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

- We are not promised that we will reach our goal in this life, but we are **commanded to advance toward it** by assaulting those inclinations and habits in which sin’s presence is recognized.
- It is a **painful discipline** because sin has become so much a part of our lives, yet mortification can be and is an **effective discipline**. It is part of a healthy Christian experience.

3:10 Step three, we must know our superiority as children of God.

- There is not a lot of heart for a fight if we don’t think we are going to win. To expect defeat is to ensure it. On the other hand, we are ensured victory because of who we now are. Our new nature is superior to our sin nature for several reasons.

1) The Spirit implanted a new life principle in us. It is no longer our nature to sin; our heart’s desire for it is no longer there. Instead, through our new birth, he has given us a heart for righteousness.

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

2) The Spirit dealt a death blow to sin in us. When Christians fight sin, they combat a dethroned and debilitated foe.

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--*

Rom 6:14 *For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

Eph. 4:22-24 *[You] were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

3) God has put in us a heart of love for others to protect and honor them by not sinning against them.

- We must understand that God has given us resources at our disposal.

Grow (God’s Word and Christian fellowship) The more we abound in the fruits of the Spirit, the less we will be concerned with the works of the flesh. **Gal 5:16** *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

Watch It is our responsibility to shun temptation. **1 Cor 10:12-13** *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Pray **Heb 4:15,16** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*