

“LICENSE TO KILL SIN.”

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Sermon Texts: Romans 8:12-15; Colossians 3:5-10

Belgic Confession Article 24

Introduction.

Why am I returning to this topic? Because this business of sanctification is a real challenge. We all know that we are all sinners, we have sinned and we continue to sin, we do what is wrong in the eyes of God. I am a sinner and you are a sinner.

On the one hand it's a relief to know that, to know that none of us are perfect, that all of us fall short of the glory of God, that none of us has any grounds for boasting or pride.

On the other hand it's cause for much heartache and distress almost to the point of despairing that we have so much sin remaining in our life. I hate how little progress I make in resisting temptation and sin.

I freely admit that I am a chief among sinners. I find some comfort in those words of Paul.

I appreciate his honest assessment of his own spiritual progress. The more mature he became spiritually, the more clearly he saw the depth of his own indwelling sin and depravity. Listen to this progression in three chronological verses from early in his ministry to the very end.

I Corinthians 15:9 For I am the *least of the apostles*, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Ephesians 3:8 To me, though I am the *very least of all the saints*, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

I Timothy 1:15 ... Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners, of whom I am the foremost (chief)*.

Then consider another comment Paul makes about his spiritual life.

Romans 7:22-23 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Paul saw himself as a world class sinner, an expert sinner. Paul saw his own heart as desperately wicked. He would agree with the Psalmist in saying that his sins went over his head and were more than the numbers of hairs on his head.

So what does this mean? Does it mean that if so great a saint as the Psalmist or as Paul had sin trouble that we can just resign ourselves to it and stop fretting over it? Does it mean we just throw our hands up and become complacent?

No, it means just the opposite. It means that this is war, this is one battle after another and every battle must be fought. Sin is our enemy. Sin is out to drag us down as far as it can and kill us if possible.

Mortification, putting to death indwelling sin.

We are commanded in Scripture to kill sin. The old KJV word for this is mortify the flesh.

Romans 8:13 If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you *put to death* [mortify] the deeds of the body, you will live.

Colossians 1:5-10 *Put to death* [mortify] therefore what is earthly in you.

The word mortify has two possible meanings. It can mean to be embarrassed or humiliated. We are mortified if our zipper is down in public or our socks don't match or our child throws a huge tantrum in the cereal aisle.

The second meaning is to put to death; kill; subduing, deny fleshly desires or bodily appetites through self-denial, discipline or self-control. The old Latin word is the root we get mortal, mortuary and mortician from, all words dealing with death.

So we could use the word with both meanings in one sentence. "If we were more mortified by our sin we might mortify it more."

Mortification of sin is the lifelong fight of every Christian against the world, the flesh and the devil. It's a fight to the end, a fight until the day we die.

Our goal is to become what we *are*, children of God made in His image, and to no longer be what we *were*, children of wrath in the image of Satan.

When Marshall lived with us he trained and practiced a form of martial arts called Wing Chun. He was constantly working out and practicing and getting others to practice with him. He was constantly honing his skills. He had a punching bag and a wooden fight dummy out in the breeze way. He also bought many weapons used in hand to hand combat, knives, swords and nunchucks.

We must do the same in this battle with sin. Since this is mortal combat we need some tools and some tactics for this warfare. We have to be equipped to fight with the right weapons and we have to know how to use them to do battle with our sin.

Let's look through Scripture for some wisdom to help us win this battle.

First, we must remember that the mortal blow has already been dealt against sin. Jesus took all our sin on Himself and died for our sins so that we would no longer have to die for our sins. Sin and death are defeated foes.

Because of the death and victory of Jesus, we do not have one sin that we must bear. He bore them all on the cross. When we by faith believe in Jesus then His death becomes our death.

Romans 6:5-6 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Colossians 3:3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

The war is won, sin cannot and will not ultimately triumph over us. The end is certain.

Second, develop the mindset that we are not slaves but sons. We belong to Christ and no longer to Satan. Remember whose you are and who is on your side.

Romans 8:31-34 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Mortifying sin will not save us or gain us salvation or make us more acceptable to God. Christ has done all that already. Putting to death our old ways is part of our work of faith, part of living by the Spirit, part of being a new person in Christ.

It's a great help in battle to know our superiority over our enemy. Nobody will take up a fight if you don't think you have any chance of winning. We must have no pessimism about this battle, God is with us and God has giving us means to fight and win. We have His Spirit of Sonship, His Spirit of power in our hearts.

We can join the battle in the confidence of the Holy Spirit.

Third, admit your sin and confess your sin every day. And I mean every day. Confess every known sin every time you sin. Keep your heart soft, keep your conscience extra sensitive to sin. Stay humble, let him who thinks he stays pay heed lest he fall.

Proverbs 28:13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

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

If. That's the condition. Confession and repentance are necessary to receive God's mercy and forgiveness. This is as necessary to spiritual health as food is to physical health. The person who covers up sin or hides sin will not prosper or recover. Don't harbor any unconfessed sin.

Never, never, never give up. Don't let Satan win. Confession and repentance defeats him every time. That is not what he wants you to do. He doesn't want your sin to drive you back to the cross and closer to Jesus. When you sin and Satan thinks he has got a victory, crush him with confession and repentance.

Don't let failure lead to despair or to giving up or giving in.

And consider the wisdom of having someone in your life you can confess your sin to. Do we want victory, do we want to win our battles? Then why do we ignore the wisdom of Scripture and keep trying to go it on our own.

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Fourth, stir up a holy hatred of sin in your heart. That's the one hatred you should cultivate. Love what God loves and hate what God hates.

Proverbs 6:16-19 There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him:
17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil,
19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

Hate your sin, hate your anger, impatience, greed, pride and arrogance, lust and sinful desires, your covetousness and envy, your jealousy, your prejudice, your critical spirit and critical tongue, your gossip and slander, your tearing down of others.

Fifth, don't let sin into your heart. Don't open the door and invite it in.

Romans 6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Romans 13:14 Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

I Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you ... to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Sin is a bully, once you let it in it starts pushing you around and taking over and telling you what to do.

Don't make any plans that give sin a possible foothold. Don't test your purity with the SI Swimsuit Issue. Don't give gluttony an edge in Cold Stone Creamery. Don't cultivate covetousness in Nordstroms or with a implement catalogue. Don't promote pride in some one-upping conversation over coffee or around the water cooler.

Stay away from the traps and the snares. Don't visit the places of temptation. Don't be with those who pull you down. Be especially wary of when or where you are most vulnerable. Avoid the appearances of evil and you avoid the evil.

Pay attention to the world around you and how the world is constantly trying to get in you.

A boat belongs in the water but when the water gets in the boat the boat sinks. God made us to be in the world as salt and light, but when the world gets in us our salt is no longer salty and our light grows dim.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Watch, be on your guard, resist, flee. Don't let seeds take root. Shun evil influences.

Sixth, work hard to develop new ways of thinking, new mental habits. Stop playing those old tapes, erase them and record over them with new thoughts.

Romans 8:5 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.

II Corinthians 10:5 ... take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Cultivate love for Christ, cultivate holiness, cultivate holy affections and desires.

Seventh, pray, pray, pray. Ask for the help of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Spirit to pray, ask Jesus to pray, ask your closest friends to pray. Pray. This is a spiritual battle and can only be won with spiritual weapons. This is a supernatural war and it can only be won with supernatural weapons.

II Corinthians 10:3-4 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Hebrews 4:16 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.

Application and conclusion.

By this list I don't wish to imply that killing our sins is easy or a simple seven step process.

The killing of sin is first God's work and then our work. Anyone who thinks he can do it on his own is a fool and will soon find himself back in sin and deeper than before.

This doesn't begin with will power. It begins with the Spirit's power. And it continues in warfare, daily combat. The reason it's so hard is we are fighting what's so ingrained, what's so natural to us. Our natural inclinations and desires are for sin, not against it so we are going against our grain. Our pride and slothfulness make it even harder.

It's as hard as plucking out an eye or cutting off our right hand, it's that hard. And it's that kind of painful.

It takes constant practice. We must become trained in the skill of killing sin. For as long as we remain in this body of flesh we will have to deny our fleshly desires and kill our fleshly nature. It's a life-long work. We will never achieve a full and complete victory in this life. We will never kill all our sin.

But let's die with our boots on and our sword drawn, let's die warriors and conquerors by the grace of God and the strength of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.