

Mortified

To the Romans..., Pt. 15

We have come to a shift in Paul's letter to the Romans. The first 7 chapters are about his theology – his view and explanation of salvation – what's gone wrong with the world and what God has done about. What's gone wrong is sin and what God did about it was come into the world in the person of Jesus Christ and take our sin into himself on the cross – killing it with himself. That's what Jesus did, he swallowed up the penalty of sin – which is death – in his own death.

It's like cancer. I *hate* cancer. I've been praying for a lot of people with cancer this week. You ever hear somebody say when a person dies of cancer, "They lost their battle with cancer today." We need to stop saying that. They didn't lose, at best it was a draw. Cancer is a cell that needs a living host to survive, so when the person died, the cancer cells died with them. So it was at least a tie. Mutually assured destruction. If I die of cancer one day, please say, "Today cancer lost it's battle with Anthony." Because I'm taking that disease out, if it kills me!

So Jesus swallowed our sin and killed it. And then three days later, the Holy Spirit brought him back to life. And if his death is the theme of the first half of Romans – justification by faith – then the second half

is about the ability to live a new life that is unleashed in us through the power of that same Holy Spirit. The second half of Romans, is asking the question, How does change really happen in somebody's life? And Romans chapter 8 hits that answer hard. So we're going to look at it for a few weeks.

Several times during this series, I have given you quotes about how important a particular section is. It's almost become a game for me, because it's like *every* section of Romans is the most important. But listen to how one prominent commentator begins his explanation of this chapter.

"The inner sanctuary within the cathedral of Christian faith; the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden; the highest peak in a range of mountains – such are some of the metaphors used by interpreters who extol chapter 8 as **the greatest passage within what so many considered to be the greatest book in scripture.** While the very riches of God's Word make any such comparisons precarious, Romans 8 deserves to be put in the front rank for its rich and comprehensive portrayal of what it means to be a Christian. Prominent in this description is the work of the Holy Spirit." (Moo, 467-468)

And that's right, the word spirit – *pneuma* – occurs 21 times in this chapter – there are only 39 verses, so that's one mention of the spirit every other verse. But this chapter is not so much *about* the Holy Spirit as it is about what the Holy Spirit *does*, and that's probably the most appropriate way to learn about the Holy Spirit, by seeing his ministry in the lives of Christians. How the Spirit enables us to apply what Christ has done – get the knowledge of the gospel from our heads to our hearts – so that we can truly live changed lives.

Well, we will spend several weeks on this, but let's get started by reading our text. This morning will deal with **Romans 8:1–13**:

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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 For 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. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. 12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 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.

There is so much here. But let's take this business about being “in Jesus Christ” to show the freedom we have to live changed lives. Did you catch that part? “If Christ is in you...” Christ in you is the Holy Spirit taking residence in your soul, and when that happens, you get three things. You get a new freedom to *know* yourself, you get a new method to *change* yourself, and you get a new power to *be* yourself. Know, change, be...yourself. That's how we'll structure this morning.

Point one: You get a new freedom to know yourself.

In Romans 7, which we looked at last week, Paul argues that in every one of us - even the best of us, even the Saint Pauls - there's a dark mass – to keep our cancer metaphor – a tumor of self-absorption, self-concentration, self-centeredness. And it's far worse than any of us want to admit. And it makes us capable of terrible sin and evil.

We looked at the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde last Sunday if your were here. Paul says, that is the story of the human nature – you, me, all of us, are split between a reputable person on the outside and a monster on the inside. Then *immediately* after saying that he turns to **Romans 8:1** and he says simultaneously, “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

The word “condemnation” is the Greek word *katakrima*, a legal term which means “to have a judgment against.” To be condemned or to be guilty means there's something *against* you, that you're *liable* for something and you're in a state of estrangement until you pay your debt, let's say, to society. But this is saying that *though* we not only are capable of wrong-doing but we're *doing* wrong...at the same moment with regard to God, nothing we have ever done brings us into condemnation. With regard to God there is *no* liability.

And that word “no” – Paul actually chose a very strong Greek word to portray that because it means “never ever”. Many Christians misunderstand this and think that once they confess their sins, they are forgiven and no longer under condemnation, but then if they sin again – let's be honest, it's not “if” but “when” – then they are back under condemnation until they repent and ask forgiveness again. Wash, rinse, repeat like a shampoo commercial. But that's not what this word means. This word “no” means “never”. Condemnation for Christians no longer exists. It has been destroyed. Never again. That's what it's saying.

So Romans 7 is just saying we are capable of tremendous evil and *immediately* says at the same time, simultaneously, if you're in Christ, none of that can ever bring you into condemnation with regard to God. Now this is astounding, and it's unique. There's a place in **Luke 11:13**, where Jesus is speaking to his disciples. He's actually teaching them about prayer, and he says to his disciples, “*If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*”

Think about this. He's talking to the people he *loves*, that he delights in, that he's going to die for, that he's unconditionally committed to – these are the guys he's hand picked to lead the church when he's gone – “Oh yeah, you're evil.” Can you hear Jesus saying this to you? “I love you. I will never forsake you. I'm unconditionally committed to you. I delight in you...but you're evil, you know.”

Have you heard that? Because if you have, you have something that - from what I can tell - no system of thought, no philosophy, no religion, East, West, individualistic, collectivistic, liberal, conservative can give you. You know there's a liberal mindset that never calls anyone sinful or evil, including yourself, because all problems are really functions of psychological or sociological dynamics.

And when you really do something far more cruel or cowardly or worse than anything you ever thought you were capable of, you have no category for it. You'll go into denial. *But* there is a conservative mindset that *does* use the terms sinful and evil...for people over there. And whose very identity is based on the idea that, “I'm not one of them. I'm one of the virtuous people. I'm not like those relativists, those anarchists. I'm one of the good people.”

And when *you* find yourself - and you will - doing things worse, more cruel, more cowardly than anything you have ever done, you won't have a category for it.

You won't know how to deal with it. You will go into denial. But the gospel of Jesus, Jesus' attitude, Jesus' statement, “If you're in Christ, you are simultaneously evil and absolutely loved,” gives us a freedom. You say, “Well, that's crazy. That's contradictory.” Yeah, it's crazy. Admittedly, it's really weird, but let me show you how great it is.

Because first of all, it gives you an unmatched, unique sociological freedom. What I mean by that is you don't have to divide. If you understand this, you *can't* divide the world anymore into the good guys and the bad guys. Some people say there are the good people, and then there are the *liberals*. Some say there are the good people, and then there are the *conservatives*, the fundamentalists. If you don't see this divide particularly in this moment of our nation's history, I don't even know what to do for you.

Everybody is saying there's a good and bad, but if you're a Christian, if you have *any* understanding of this, you know the difference between you and a prostitute, you and a murderer, you and a Nazi, the only difference between you and them is that the seeds in your heart that make you capable of being or doing that just never got watered, so they never sprouted. Therefore, in Christ we have the freedom to find common humanity with people, anybody. We sense our common, fragile humanity, and we don't write people off. We don't call the people “those people” or “the Other.”

But even more importantly, the gospel gives you psychological freedom to handle your faults and failures and then you won't have to deny or spin them or repress them and make it impossible for you to know who you are. It's only when you hear Jesus say, "Look, you're capable of terrible things, *and* I am absolutely, unconditionally committed to you", only if you have that kind of support will you really be able to be honest.

You say, "Oh, this idea of calling yourself a 'sinner'. That's emotionally unhealthy." Oh no, it's emotionally unhealthy *not* to be able to call yourself a sinner. Can I give you an example? It's very personal. In fact, it's so close I debated whether or not I should use it because it may be a little too raw. At the end of service, last week I asked you to pray for me because I was driving up to Dallas to have a reconciliation meeting with a denomination official against whom I had brought a charge of misuse of office.

And I asked you to pray for me because of the three of us in the room, I was the one without power. All I had on my side was the truth. Some of you have very kindly reached out to ask how it went - and I so do appreciate your prayers - but the truth is, it went...*awful!* I was spiritually abused – there's no other word for it – for three *hours* by a man that I

deeply love and respect. I couldn't sleep for days. Ladies, I have a new found appreciation for what it means to be victimized when you dare speak truth to a male-oriented, authoritarian system. I knew it intellectually, but now I've felt it emotionally. You could have illuminated all of Victorian London with the gaslighting I endured.

Now, this is a Christian we're talking about, a Christian leader no less. How could he treat me so terribly? It was because, the only identity he had was a Christian leader...not a sinner. At one point, I tried to explain how I feared the issue he was being charged over – and even his leadership agreed that he had misstepped – had become an idol in his life. Now, if you've been around our church even a short time, you know how much I talk about idolatry as *the* thing that's wrong with us. Disordered loves; taking good things and putting them in the ultimate place that only belongs to God.

But he just erupted, "Oh, now I'm an idolater!" Very passive aggressive, you know. And I just said, "Of course you are, I am too, all of life is repentance, etc, etc." Again you've heard me teach on it over and over. And to soften the conversation, I then related issues in my own life that I struggled with to define my identity apart from God...and he used *that* against me as well!

It was stunning. And it was very sad. Now, I have forgiven him, and I love him – honestly, the whole thing would have been easier if I *didn't* love him so much – but our relationship is not reconciled. Because I don't trust him. You wouldn't trust a friend who clearly had a drinking problem if they couldn't even admit they *might* have a drinking problem, right? So how could such a spiritual man act in such a fleshly way – to use Paul's verbiage here? Because he knew he was spiritual...but he couldn't handle the possibility that he was a sinner.

Are you going to tell me it's emotionally unhealthy to be able to call yourself a sinner? For him it was the *absolute* opposite of emotional unhealth. To be able to say, "I am capable of terrible things, but I am unconditionally loved," is the *epitome* of mental health. And it's the gospel that gives us that. The gospel gives you freedom to admit who you are when the information comes, to see where you *do* need to change, the freedom to know yourself. That's point one.

Point two: You get a new *method to change yourself*. Up in **verse 3**, there is another reiteration of one of the themes of Romans 7. It says, "*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.*" Do you remember? We talked about this last week. One of the points Paul makes in Romans 7 is we have all this self-centeredness and this self-absorption and this self-concentration – our inner Mr. Hyde.

Or to use today's metaphor, we have this tumor in us that's making our own lives miserable with this self-concentration. It makes the lives of people around us miserable as well. What are we going to do about it? And what we *usually* do is we apply willpower and we see the moral law and we say, "We're going to live up to the moral law."

And Paul is pointing out here - he's summarizing what he said in Romans 7 - that doesn't help you, because self-centeredness and self-righteousness can take a moral form as well as an immoral form. You can be a Pharisee as well as a criminal and still make the world a mess of a place. So what *are* we supposed to do in order to change ourselves?

The answer is **v. 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.*" Back in Romans 6 and 7 we learned that when Paul talks about "the flesh", he's not talking about the physical body. When Paul talks about the "deeds of the body" or the "deeds of the flesh", he's talking about the whole life being controlled by a self-salvation project. What Paul means by living in the flesh means to be your own savior, to be your own lord, instead of letting God be your Savior and Lord.

And that everything in your life, everything your body does, all your actions and attitudes are controlled by an effort to be your *own* savior and lord. It's a self-salvation project. That's what it means to live according to the flesh.

And what he's saying in verse 13 is fascinating. He says, "If you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if you root out and destroy *your particular ways* of trying to save yourself, your particular ways of doing self-salvation, you will live. Dead fish go with the flow, live fish swim upstream. If you live according to self-salvation project, you will die, but if you root out and identify and destroy your particular ways of doing self-salvation, then and only then will you live."

You say, "How does *that* work? What *is* this new method?" At the heart of the new method, verses 5 and 6 say, is recognizing and changing what you set your mind on. Look at v. 5 & 6 - it's just another way of saying verse 13 – Paul says, "*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. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*"

Now in order to properly unpack this, you must keep two things in mind. First of all, in the Bible "mind" and "heart" are not two different things. Because in English, in our way of thinking, "mind" means the reason and cognition, and "heart" means the emotions, but not in the Bible. Mind and heart are the core of the being. And therefore, when Paul says you set your mind on the flesh, he's not just saying you have bad thoughts.

He's not even talking only about thoughts. Here's what he's saying. He's asking you to look at yourself and recognize what preoccupies you. What is your heart *most* engrossed in? What do you daydream about? What has captured your imagination? What most preoccupies and engrosses the very core of your thinking and your dreaming and your fantasizing and your heart and your mind?

Paul says whatever *that is* is always your way of justifying yourself, your way of *proving* yourself, your way of developing your own sense of value and meaning and security. And therefore, that's your way of being your own savior and lord. So to summarize, to set the mind on the flesh is not just having bad thoughts. It's essentially to put your mind and your heart on something besides Jesus Christ as **functional savior**.

So then what would it mean to “set your mind on the Spirit?” Let me first of all, flesh out the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. On the night before Jesus was crucified, after the Last Supper, before he was arrested, Jesus was walking and talking with his disciples. And he wanted to assure them that everything was going to be all right. I mean, he was the one about to be tortured, lynched and murdered, but he wanted to comfort them.

And so he said, “I’m not going to be with you forever, but it’s ok, because your God is not going to leave you on your own. In fact, you won’t believe me now, but trust me, what God is sending in my place will be *even better* than me. And then he says, this is in **John 14:26-27**, “*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*”

When you become a Christian – when you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead – when you are *saved*, a number of things happen. Legally, before God, your status is changed. You are justified – your sins are forgiven – and you go from being an enemy of God to a member of God’s family, with all the rights and privileges – *and* responsibilities – that come with it.

But something is also happening *in* you. This is the “born again” part, the new life. But what does that mean? Well, what makes you alive in the first place? Genesis says that when God made Adam, he took material – dust – and breathed on it – spirit. So your life is a combination of body and soul – physical and nonmaterial. And the same thing is happening at your “new birth”. Can I show you?

Do you know when the disciples of Jesus “got saved”? First of all, no one could be saved in a New Testament sense until *after* the cross and resurrection, that’s what the gospel means. And we are shown the very moment it happens to the apostles. It’s also in John’s gospel. On Resurrection Sunday night, the disciples are all hiding behind locked doors because they’re afraid they’re next.

And suddenly, it says Jesus appeared in the room. And he speaks to them. Now, remember what we just read that he said to them in the garden three nights before? That’s important. Now, look at **John 20:21**, “*Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*” It’s the same message about peace. So they’re supposed to be thinking about the last time he said that to them.

And then look what happens – this is *so* significant - (John 20:22) “*And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”* What on earth? He is re-enacting what God did to Adam in Genesis 2, God breathed on the dust and the spirit of life entered – that’s the first birth. When you are born again, Jesus breaths the sprit of life – The Holy Spirit – into you. That’s what it means to be a Christian. We say that “Jesus lives in my heart”, well, technically Jesus is at the right hand of the Father preparing heaven for us. It is the “Spirit of Christ”, the Holy Spirit that comes and dwells in you.

And what did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do? “Teach you and remind you of everything I have said to you.” Now, the Holy Spirit actually does a number of things – that’s another *series* – but a key role is to remind us of Jesus. To point our hearts and minds back - over and over - to who Jesus is and what Jesus said and what Jesus did. In other words, the Holy Spirit’s role is to focus your mind on your *real* functional savior, Jesus Christ.

But you have to be *mindful* of him – “*set your mind on the Spirit*”. That’s prayer. That’s mediation. That’s reading and memorizing Scripture. But when you do...peace and life. I will frequently have people come to see me for spiritual advice or counsel, and I usually have some suggestions of this and that.

But the most important thing I will usually say is, “Are you a Christian? If you are, that means the Holy Spirit lives inside you. Which means you have *everything* you need to handle this situation. There’s actually nothing I can give you...I can *remind* you of some things that maybe you’re not being mindful of, but if you have the Holy Spirit, you have *everything* you need.”

So that’s the new method that you need – setting your mind, not on the flesh, but on the Spirit – and then that method will lead directly to the third thing. **Point three: You get a new power to be yourself.** Where do you get the power to really make this change? Now, on the one hand we’ve said that the Holy Spirit will point you to the power. But it’s also correct to say that the Holy Spirit *is in fact* the power. The Holy Spirit is the greatest power in the universe.

Now, you know who can tell us a thing or two about power? Darth Vader. But let’s go back before he was Darth Vader, back to when he was Anakin Skywalker – not far enough back to cute little Annie the kid, but the whiney, annoying Hayden Christianson version. Do you remember when he kept having dreams about his secret wife Padme’s death? I know, I’ve tried to forget those movies too!

But he's talking to his friend and mentor, Senator Palpatine about it – who is of course, the devil – and the Senator says to him, “Only through me can you achieve a power greater than any Jedi. Learn to know the dark side of the Force, Anakin, and you will be able to save your wife from certain death.” Of course, that will be the very temptation that will in fact lead Anakin to the dark side, because the greatest power in the world is the power over death.

But do you understand that this is exactly the power that God is offering you? Look at **V.11**, “*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*” Jesus was dead. He didn't just swoon on the cross, he died. And he was in the tomb, dead as dead can be. And on Easter morning the Holy Spirit came into that body and say, “Hey, Jesus, let's get up.” And...he...did!

That, my friends, is power. The greatest power in the universe – in fact, according to Genesis, it's the same power that created the universe to begin with. See, when you're the original creator, you can just redo things. You know, some business jerk got control of Taylor Swift's early albums and was being really exploitative towards her, so what did she do? She said, fine, keep the records. My voice sang them, I'll just sing them again on a new record. And *this one* I own. Brilliant!

Do you realize that's what the Holy Spirit is doing to you? God created you, breathed life into you. But because of sin, you have an enemy that says, “I own you now.” And did God say, “Oh no!”? Nope, He said, “Well the Spirit breathed life into you the first time, the Spirit will just have to breath life into again. And *this one*, I own.”

And of course, what we've been saying all through these first 7 chapters of Romans is that the *way* God bought you out of the terrible record deal you made was through the price that Jesus paid on the cross. That's the legal part. But the actual change happens when the power of that is applied to your life.

And it's the Holy Spirit's job to *smite* you with the beauty of Jesus Christ and what he has done until you weep and the truth begins to drop, and what he says about you is more real than what your boss says about you or you're ex says about you or what your parents said about you or what *anybody* says about you.

There's a great place where John Donne in one of his sonnets says - listen carefully, it's really, really amazing language - he's speaking to Jesus, and he says;

Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

“I’ll never be chaste. I’ll never have self-control.” What he’s really trying to say here is, “A love of this person or that person will be far more real than the love of Jesus for my soul. The only way I’m ever going to have self-control, the only way I’m going to be able to forgive my boss, the only way I’m going to be able to not worry about money, the only way I’m going to be able to handle the rejection I’m getting in life...The only way I can walk through life at large without it all pulling me down is I need the ministry of the Holy Spirit to make what Jesus Christ has done for me so real that I *weep* with the beauty of it and the truth drops and I’m off. That *replaces* those other things in the core of my being, which I’m trying to push there to the center of my being. *That’s* what does it. That’s the change.”

You say, “How does that happen?” Paul gives us an idea in **v. 3**, where he says, “*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.*” That little phrase “for sin”, I know that looks so innocuous on the page, but...all experts and commentators and scholars understand that is a technical term all through the Old Testament, for a “sin offering”.

And here’s what it says. It’s not enough just to say, “Just know God loves you in general.” You have to fix your mind on...what? You have to let the Holy Spirit show you...what? How Jesus Christ was condemned in your place, how Jesus Christ sacrificially gave himself and was condemned in your place.

That’s the heart of the gospel. You first study that. You learn that. And then you spend the rest of your life letting the Holy Spirit amass radioactive material to work on the tumors of your heart. And “tumor” really is a good metaphor. Sin is a tumor. What is cancer? Cancer is just cell growth gone bad, so it’s going to kill you. What is sin? It’s self-centeredness, self-absorption, self-concentration. The self gone bad and it’s going to kill you unless you kill it first.

What is the radioactive isotope that will shrink and kill those tumors before they kill you? It’s what Jesus Christ did on the cross, illuminated by the Holy Spirit. And the more you allow the Holy Spirit control over your life, the more you’ll see it. You ever get a new car and then all the sudden you start seeing that same car *everywhere*? They were always there, but you’re more attuned to them now.

And the same thing with the Holy Spirit. You'll begin to see the message of the gospel and the love of Jesus everywhere you look. This is how I am able to do *God at the Movies*. People say, "I don't know how you ever got a sermon out of *that*." Well, the truth is, I watch movies *with* the Holy Spirit. I mean you do too! The Spirit never leaves you, so some of you are dragging him into some pretty dark places! But I simply ask the Holy Spirit to watch with me, read with me, listen with me. And so when I see Iron Man sacrificing his life so many can live, the voice inside whispers, "Hmmm, who does *that* remind you of?"

You say, "Anthony do you do that intentionally?" Well, in the beginning, yes I did. Years ago I began to seek an intentional path of living an abiding life. Abiding in the vine that is Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, that's something else that comes from John's gospel. But I began to be intentional about inviting the Holy Spirit to do *everything* with me. Really to do everything *through* me. I saw a counselor and he helped me. I've shared some of the Abiding Life resources with some of you. But they say it takes about five-years of intentional focus to begin to make the abiding life - living in the life of the Spirit - a habit.

But eventually it becomes a little like breathing. In fact, both in Greek and in Hebrew, the words for "breath" and "spirit" are the same. I think this is what Paul means when he talks elsewhere about "pray without ceasing." It's just the in and out, ongoing awareness of the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

And as we discovered last week, when I'm not in the Spirit, I'm in the flesh. And that's no good, because I'm with Paul, "In my flesh dwells no good thing." And so we have to kill it. The old saints talked about "mortifying the flesh". Comes from the old King James Version of **Romans 8:13** – and it helps if you read it like a pirate - "*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.*"

And of course, today that word "mortification" just means embarrassed, so we don't use the word anymore. In the old days it meant to put something in the mortuary. And there was a 17th Puritan writer named John Owen, who more than anyone else, I think, showed how this mortification of the body works. He has made it make sense for me at least. And it all has to do with getting our focus back on what Jesus has done for us.

Remember we started the morning by saying there is now no condemnation? And that's a legal term. But as great as the legal change in our status is – and it is, without it we're toast – but legal status doesn't inspire anyone. What stirs more emotion at a wedding? “Based upon the laws of the State of Texas I now pronounce you man and wife” or “You may kiss the bride!” You're not married without the law – but what's a marriage without the kiss?

And so this is how John Owen explains the life change that follows becoming a Christian. When a nonbeliever sins and when a Christian sins – the sin is the sin. But the difference between the two is like a man who has transgressed the laws of the state, and a man who has done something he should not have done in his marriage. He's not breaking the law, he is wounding the heart of his wife. The law really doesn't enter into it, it's not a legal violation, it's a violation of love. In a sense, it's a much more serious violation than legal condemnation, isn't it?

So when you sin against God, the Holy Spirit doesn't read you the riot act or refer you to the law at all. Instead the Spirit points you to Jesus. Shows you again what he did on the cross out of love for you. And that completely changes the way we look at our sin. John Owen, in his classic work *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers* preached that gospel to his heart. Here's what that's going to sound like:

“What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on? Is this the return I make to the Father for his love, to the Son for his blood, to the Holy Spirit for his grace? Do I thus requite the Lord? Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash? What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? Do I count communion with him of so little value? Shall I endeavor to disappoint the very purpose of the death of Christ?”

That's how the Holy Spirit operates in the life of a believer. But it doesn't start with guilt, it starts with love. It's when I think of what Jesus has done for me, that's what begins to shrink the tumors of sin that ravage me. It *mortifies* my stupid egocentric heart that's always worried about what I'm getting here and what I'm getting there and, “Is somebody noticing me?” It *mortifies* with joy. The joy of what Jesus Christ has done for me mortifies my ego into silence so it's not bothering me as much and it's not bothering you as much.

That's the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the power that *dwells in you*...if you'll have him. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead. The same power that will raise your body up one day...and leave the tumors of sin behind.

Let's pray...