

Sanctification - Part 1

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Preacher: John Overton

[0:00] So, I've been looking forward to tonight for a long time. We've been doing the gospel this entire semester, and we've been focusing on all these different aspects of salvation, from justification to adoption to ransom to all these different things.

And tonight, we've come to the culmination of salvation, and that being the topic of sanctification. It is a vast topic that we will never exhaust, even if we did two semesters of just sanctification. So, tonight's probably going to be just, it's more of like a survey than it is like an exposition. It's going to be just kind of a survey of things, a survey of questions that I hope will result in you guys taking this stuff home, taking verses home, taking things you hear home, and studying them for yourself.

Okay? So, hopefully that's what happens, is you guys leave feeling more inquisitive than when you came, and leave feeling like you want to dive into this topic more and more.

It is the joy of my life to seek the Lord for sanctification, to seek the Lord for His glory, for my joy, and that is the whole essence of what this topic is about.

[1:19] So, let me tell you guys where we're going to go in the next two weeks. Because I'm going to do this for two weeks now. I'm just going to pose six questions total that I think are really relevant, hot topic questions that everybody probably here in some degree wants to know about.

These are questions that I think are really just kind of pertinent to all of us. Things that I've heard asked and things that I myself have asked as I've studied this.

I'm just going to read them to you so we can just, again, have an idea of where we're tracking. The first question is going to be this. I see more failure in my life than victory.

Am I still being sanctified? Number two is what about that one besetting sin in my life that I just can't seem to shake? Number three, I know God desires for me to be sanctified, but I honestly don't know how to be.

So, we're going to talk about how. And then next week we're going to do these three. If no matter what I do, I can't lose my salvation, then why should I even care to be sanctified?

[2:33] Number five, where should I start? And number six, what should I be expecting? Okay, so we're just going to, it's a really broad, those are really broad questions that are not going to, we're not going to cover everything in detail, but we're just going to try to touch on some of the main elements, I think, that are very, very important.

I'm just going to begin with a definition, a simple definition of what it means to be sanctified. It's a big word that describes something that's very, very essential for you to understand.

The first definition is this, to be sanctified is to grow in one's genuine imitation of Christ. To be sanctified is to grow in one's genuine imitation of Christ.

One old pastor said it like this, because we are justified, which means to be declared righteous in the sight of God, right? We've talked about that. To be declared righteous, to be declared innocent, to be declared unguilty in the sight of God.

So, because we are justified, we are to be holy. Separated from sin. Separated to God. Not as a mere indication that our faith is real, and that therefore we are legally safe, but because we were justified for this very purpose, that we might be holy.

[3:55] Now, what is he saying? He is saying that the only reason, the main reason why you were saved, was to be made holy. To be made holy.

To be purified. To be set apart for God. That is huge. I'll show you in Scripture.

In 1 Peter 2, verse 24, he says this, and he himself, we're speaking to Jesus here, and he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross.

Why? That we might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by his wounds you were healed. So Jesus died to make you holy.

That you might release and relinquish sin in your life, and that you might cling on to God in holiness. Titus 2, another corroborating verse, verse 14, Titus 2, 14, says, speaking of Jesus again, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds.

[5 : 21] So Jesus Christ gave himself up, he died on the cross, he spread his arms, he was crucified, that he might redeem for himself a people that were zealous for good deeds, that were holy.

That is why you were saved. That is why it is so ridiculous and insane for you to think that a Christian can be saved and yet have no degree of sanctification happening in their life.

There is no such thing as a habitually sinful, carnal Christian that has no affection for Christ and does not walk in the commandments of the Lord Jesus in some degree.

Because that is the only reason why God saved you was to make you holy, to save you for himself. And I have proven that from scripture, you can't deny that. So really, the entire Christian life is summed up in that one word, sanctification.

That is what it is all about. A buddy of mine said, we are saved in an instant, but we are sanctified over a lifetime. Justification happens in a moment and costs you nothing.

[6 : 42] Sanctification happens over your whole life and it costs you everything. Okay? The Greek word is hagiadzo and it implies being set apart to God in holiness and purity.

So when you see that word in the Bible, when you see sanctify, it's hagiadzo. Probably a terrible rendering of that, but nobody here knows Greek, so you don't know anyway. Sanctification, according to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which is a reliable source, you could say, is the work of God's, so sanctification is the work of God's free grace.

So it's the work of God, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness.

J.I. Packer said this, regeneration, we've talked about that too, regeneration, right? Being born again in Christ. regeneration is birth.

Sanctification is growth. In regeneration, so when you are born again, God implants desires that were not there before.

[8 : 07] Desire for God, for holiness, and for the hallowing and the glorifying of God's name in this world. Desire to pray, desire to worship, love, serve, honor, and please God.

Desire to show love and bring benefit to others. In sanctification, however, the Holy Spirit works in you and acts in you according to the purpose of God.

What He does is prompt you to work out your salvation or to express your salvation in action by fulfilling those new desires.

Do you get that? Okay, so you're saved. God redeems you. God regenerates your heart and gives you new desires, new affections, new loves, new passions for Him, for His glory. Then the Holy Spirit is given to you who then empowers you to actually act that out.

It's the energy that enables you to do that work. Christians become increasingly Christ-like as the moral profile of Jesus or the fruit of the Spirit, those qualities of the Spirit, is progressively formed in them.

[9 : 19] Let me read Philipppians 2 real quick to you. Turn there if you want. Philipppians 2. Because I want you to see this dichotomous relationship. It's both.

It's sanctification. Hear me say this from the beginning. Sanctification is 100% your effort. and it is 100% God's effort.

There is no let go and let God mentality in sanctification. There is no I've got to do everything in sanctification. It is God working through you.

It is God working in you. It is God's Spirit energizing your soul and enabling you to love God and to obey God and to serve God. But it's also you striving. It's also you resisting.

It's also you enduring. It's also you blessing when you're cursed against. It's also you loving when you're hated. It's all those things.

[10 : 20] It's the commandments of God but it's the commandments of God obeyed by you in the Spirit of God. You can't get your mind around that. That's the reality of it though.

I'm going to prove this right here in a couple of verses. So Philippians 2 verse 12 and 13 look at the very end of verse 12. It says work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Okay, that's my part, right? It says that work out your salvation with fear and trembling. That's a command. Then it says in 13 for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

So right there in that verse you see that what the Spirit has given to me for is to act out these new desires. To act out this new love that God's given to me.

Okay, so look that's kind of the definition. That's what sanctification is. It's holiness. It's growing in grace. It's learning how to love and obey Christ.

[11 : 25] So our first question. This may be many of you. I see more failure in my life than victory.

Am I still being sanctified? There are three different types of people that ask this question.

The first type is a new believer. And I would say this is probably the most common type of person that asks this question. a new believer who's struggling with sins that were common to him or common to her before Christ.

Oftentimes you're going to hear them ask this question. And in their case, okay, in this new believer's case who's struggling with a lot of sins from their past, the answer to our question is yes, you are still being sanctified.

Yes, you are. as Christ opens the eyes of a sinner to see their sin for what it is, they see it as evil, they see it as offensive, they see it as deliberately malicious against God, they see it as rebellion, they feel overwhelmed with that guilt, right?

[12 : 39] That shame just comes down upon them, it weighs down upon them heavily, and this terror that they feel soon leads them to the cross of Christ where they lose that burden, they look at Jesus in faith and they see Him and He's glorious to them and He's wonderful to them.

He sees the glory of Christ and the sacrifice of the cross, he claims that grace as their own and he praises Christ for purchasing their salvation with His blood. The thought at that point in time of ever trading that love that you see for the world's counterfeits is ridiculous, right?

We've all experienced this in some way if you're a Christian. That newness of your salvation that is just so sweet to your taste and God is so rich and so palpable you can just feel Him.

And the thought of trading that is just grotesque and it's unimaginable. And then it happens, right?

You sin.

You fall into sin again and again and again and again and again and you just feel discouraged and beaten up and downtrodden and you wonder how can I be a Christian?

[13 : 53] if I so often fail in loving Christ well. The beginning stages of sanctification, okay, listen to this.

This is a really, really good illustration I learned from Matt Chandler. Forte's of the New Year's conference. Do you guys want to go? The beginning stages of sanctification are kind of like a baby learning to walk.

Okay? Now what happens initially with the baby learning to walk? They're not good at it. I mean, they start wobbly, they start, you know, trying to prop themselves up then they kind of move along really slowly.

They're looking up for approval then they move along really slowly and sure enough if they take their hands off they just, their head is normally so big at that point in time they just kind of topple over and fall, right? And they just, you know, lose balance and they take one step and they slip on their butt, on their belly, whatever, just back and forth.

They're constantly falling. Okay? And now for you to think that God is like a father who says, what the heck are you doing?

[15 : 02] Get up. Walk like a man. Get up. You know, and yells at his kid and makes fun of his kid and sits back with his wife and says, look at this idiot right here.

To think that God is like that is ridiculous. Right? I mean, he's taking a step. You know, you're excited. What do you do? I mean, you call your wife in there. You're trying to find the video camera. You're trying to tweet your friends. You're trying to put it on Facebook.

You're YouTubing it. You know, you're super excited. I mean, I've seen an iPhone commercial where they actually have that as like the promo. You know, I mean, like capturing this special moment.

Right? They're not thinking about the fact that he can't walk at all. I mean, he's, you know, relatively speaking, he's doing wonderful. And they're rejoicing in you. Right? So God is the same way. In the beginning of your sanctification when you're a new believer, he's not furious with you because you're not walking perfectly. He's not enraged at your inability to do things the right way the first time.

[16:06] He's patient with you. Right? He's loving. He's kind. He's rejoicing. He's nudging the Holy Spirit and Jesus at the same time and saying, look at this, you know, he's taking his first steps. He's beginning to believe.

He's beginning to trust in my promises. He's not afraid anymore like he once was. He's battling, you know? That's just how you need to think of God.

So if you're sitting here and you're a relatively new believer and this is you, you struggle with sins and you're frustrated because you know that you suck a lot and the more that you're growing in this, you know, your knowledge of the Word of God, you're seeing more and more and more of the sin. God is wanting to say to you tonight through this text and through that illustration, I love you. and I'm still happy with you. So be encouraged.

1 Thessalonians 5 says, encourage the faint-hearted. So if that's you, be encouraged. the truth is, you are having victories.

[17:12] You are being sanctified. You are beginning to walk in a manner that is pleasing to God. You're beginning to. But Satan would have you believe that your failure proves your faithlessness and it proves your hopelessness.

And he accuses you, doesn't he? You will never do it right. You will never get it. You will never learn the Bible like you need to. You will never evangelize the right way. You will never know enough. You will never be enough. You will never do the right thing at the right time. And he accuses you and he lies to you and he slanders you. That's what the devil does.

If you see more failure in your life than victory, then you may be a baby, but you're not a corpse. You may not be walking well, but it's merely a matter of time.

Rejoice in the fact that your father is pleased with the progress and not with the perfection. He's pleased with progress. He's not pleased with perfection. Nobody's perfect.

[18:15] Paul wasn't perfect. You won't be. Secondly, the second person that might ask this question, I'm going to read it again because I've forgotten it myself.

I see more failure in my life than victory. Am I still being sanctified? The second person that might ask this is a mature believer. Okay?

Or a maturing believer whom God is revealing more sin to. And the answer to them is also yes. You are still being sanctified. Throughout the Christian life, God reveals more and more and more of your sin.

Okay? Oftentimes, you might hear a mature believer praying, Lord, reveal to me more of my sin. Because they hate it and they want to get rid of it at any cost possible. But with that realization, oftentimes comes this kind of question.

It comes sometimes if you don't have the right perspective, doubt and confusion and fear. this anxiety that just wells up within you because you feel like, man, I'm failing a lot more than I'm doing good things.

[19:21] You know? I've heard J-Mac say one time that the holier you become, the worse you feel. Because the more sin you feel, the more sin you see, the more hopelessness you see in yourself and this idea of self-reliance becomes ridiculous.

Right? But that's when Christ gets better as well. Turn to Psalm 38. I want to show you a wonderful, wonderful illustration of this.

David, who is an obviously mature believer, he's writing this. Psalm 38 is a prayer of a suffering penitent, as my Bible calls it.

He's remorseful over some sin that he had committed. Psalm 38, verses 2-4. He's crying out to God. He says, For your arrows have sunk deep into me, and your hand is pressed down upon me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation. There is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head as a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.

[20:42] Okay? So David is in this psalm really aware of his sin. And it's weighing down upon him deeply. He calls it like an arrow. It's sunk deep into me.

It's like a weight that's too much for me to carry. It's like I'm getting crushed. I can't hardly take the pressure of what I'm feeling. It's just this, he's crying out to God. It's very serious for him.

But then, look at Psalm 40. Psalm 40. Verses 1-3. Same guy.

Two psalms later. I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined to me and He heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock, making my footsteps firm.

And He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord. He went from despair, two psalms earlier, to this bold confidence.

[21 : 45] Many will see me in fear, He says, and will trust in the Lord as a result of my witness. I waited patiently and God heard my cry.

Okay? This is the prayers of a mature believer. It looks like that. It's common for God to expose you and then to humble you and then to strengthen you and then to overcome that sin or, excuse me, to strengthen you to overcome that sin and then expose you again in some new way.

That's kind of what the Christian life is about. It's like these ebbs and flows. It's like, you know, He teaches you one thing and you gain a little bit of victory and then He shows you something new and He's like, you're continually gaining ground, you're going up, but it's like this, you know?

It's not like, you know, Superman just flying over the... That was dumb. I'm not going to... That's stupid. That's not in my notes. That was just dumb. But you get the idea.

And there's never an end to this process. Okay, Paul, again, I quote him from Philippians 3, 12. He says, Not that I've already obtained it or have already become perfect. This is the same guy that says, I'm not really conscious of anything against myself.

[22 : 57] You know, I don't know of any sin that I'm not confessing. He says that elsewhere in Scripture, but he's admitting here, like, I haven't already obtained it. I'm not perfect. You know, so nobody is ever going to be that.

Thirdly, wait, never mind. No sin is tolerable to God, okay? Even thought sins, excuse me, even thought sins that never result in action must be purged out of us.

And so this process of continually being shown our weakness and inability can be despairing. And if your perspective is lost in the middle of it, it can lead to doubt.

And it can lead to our question. Okay? But when the believer's conscience is most agitated and when Satan's accusations are most forceful against you, it's then that the gospel of Christ will be most satisfying to you.

And the Father intends it to be that way. To prove to you again, and to prove to you again, and again, and again, the inexhaustibleness of his love.

[24 : 15] Okay? So, a side of one's sin, a vivid side of one's sin, which is disgusting, which is, you know, repulsive, you don't want anything to do with it, it seems to have a way of deepening your understanding of God's mercy and of God's grace.

And it seems to educate you so you can appreciate the gospel more. Charles Spurgeon said this, I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever gets to such extremes of wretchedness as I go.

So Spurgeon, who was this amazing, amazing, amazing, amazing biblical scholar, pastor, whatever, back in the 1800s, was a man of depression. Okay? He struggled really, really badly with depression.

It almost, he was bedridden sometimes as a result of how deep his depressions were. So he says that I am the subject of these depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever gets in such extremes as I undergo.

But I always get back again by this. I know I trust Christ. I have no reliance but in Him. If He falls, I shall fall. But if He does not fall, I shall not.

[25 : 35] Because He lives, I shall live also and I spring to my legs again and I fight with my depressions of spirit and my downcast soul and I get the victory through it.

So may you do and so you must for there is no other way of escaping from it. In your most depressed seasons, you are to get joy and peace in believing.

Hell and my sins obstruct my path but hell and sins are conquered foes. My Jesus nailed them to His cross and sang the triumph as He rose.

Okay? It's an encouraging word. There's a third kind of person that would ask this question. And that is the man who was for a little while called himself a Christian.

And yet he finds himself in a keyword willing state of continual failure to various sins. This is a person who calls himself a Christian, a professor of Christ who yet finds himself in a willing state of continual sin.

[26 : 50] in unrepentant state. This man does not hate his sin nor love Christ. He has sufficient knowledge to disguise himself but sin is still in a lot of ways and in almost every way is master.

Okay? If you, if that is you tonight and if you know that to be true of you tonight, if you don't feel any of this love for Christ do you have no regenerated heart that has any new desires for him and you've just been kind of hiding behind this facade of intellect or knowledge about God or the Bible or whatever else, you've been taught some things to kind of get by.

Maybe you're seeking God for all the wrong reasons. I'm not even going to go into all that. Then I want to warn you that God does not dwell in you and that you have thusly no means of being sanctified and your sin will, as Numbers 32 says, find you out.

All your sin will find you out. That guy from Penn State, you probably heard of him. He tried to hide for 30 years and he was eventually found out.

All your sin will find you out. You are a child of the devil if that is you. And you do the deeds of your father. You lie. You cheat. You steal. You do not love others.

[28 : 16] You have no endurance in faith. You have no defense against sin. Your religion is but a form. It has no substance to it. You do not love God. You do not fear God. You do not serve Him. And the only reason why you would serve Him is predicated upon the fact that you might get something from Him.

You may fear the idea of hell but you despise the idea of eternally worshiping Jesus in heaven. He is not precious to you.

You do not pray to Him. You do not treasure His commandments. You have never entrusted your life to Him. If offered a choice, you would prefer the world's pleasures of fame and sex and wealth over the life of joyful obedience to Christ.

You do what is only necessary to hide yourself from being found out. But if Christ was not cool, then you would not care. And the description could continue.

Your sins may have changed but you serve your flesh still. Allow me the privilege of introducing you tonight to a man named John Owen.

[29 : 22] He is a scholar of scholars and he is awesome. He says this, Every lust, every lust that you feel is a depraved habit or disposition.

Every lust continually inclining the heart to evil. then, or this then is that description of Him who has no lust mortified.

Mortified is a fancy word of saying killed. This then is a description of Him who has no lust killed. And if you are not being sanctified, you are not of God. Okay, just keep that in your mind. So if you have no lust killed, you are not of God.

This is a description of Him from the Scriptures, Genesis 6-5. Every imagination of the thoughts of His heart is only evil continually. He is always under the power of a strong bent and inclination to sin.

And the reason why a natural, this is awesome, and the reason why a natural man is not always perpetually in the pursuit of some one lust night and day is because He has many to serve.

[30 : 40] Everyone crying to be satisfied therefore He has carried on with great variety but still in general He lies toward the satisfaction of self. So what is He saying there? He's saying, A, if you have no lust mortified, then you're like the person described in Genesis 6.

Your heart is only inclined to evil always. Secondly, the reason why you don't always do the same thing, you're not always sitting in the very same way, maybe you have seasons of victory if you want to call it that for you.

You know, maybe you really get down in the dumps and you're drinking all the time and you're getting wasted all the time and so you're like, man, I just need to stop that, like that is not good for me, that's not good for what I need, you know, it's always me centered when you try to respond morally as an ungenerate man.

So you have this season of sobriety, right? But that doesn't mean you're not sinning during the time, it just means you're not serving that one master. You have many masters, you have many different varieties of ways and avenues of sin.

I'll read it again. The reason why a natural man is not always perpetually in the pursuit of someone lust night and day is because he has many to serve, every one of them crying to be satisfied, therefore he is carried on with great variety, but still in general he lies for the satisfaction of self. [32 : 02] That characterizes a lot of people you know, that think they're Christians and yet all they do is serve themselves. If you're unrepentant, if you're unbroken, if you're unnerved by your sin, if your conscience is rarely agitated, if you think little of Christ and you think much of yourself, then you are not a Christian.

You are not a Christian. You need to repent of your sin. And I hope God saves you through this indictment against you. That's what Paul did. He preached the same gospel. He preached this damnation of sinners and need for Savior. But again, going back to what we just said earlier, the more you see your sin, the more glorious that Savior becomes. So it's not necessarily a bad thing. It's a good thing. It's a necessary thing. Okay, second question. That was the longest one. What about that one besetting sin in my life that I just can't seem to shake?

How many of you are like this? You have that one thing, right? There's that one thing that just continually trips you up.

[33 : 20] You always succumb to it. It's like you can't get rid of it. It's like I know I've been set free in Christ but this thing is still shackled to me. We all feel this way in some way.

What category of sin is it for you? Lust, pride, vanity, approval, laziness, apathy, fear, doubt, anxiety, gluttony? What about vices?

What about guilty pleasures? What about bad habits? And specific sins? What about those two? Pornography, arrogance, idolatry of your own image, creature worship, needing to feel needed, an overabundance of television or video games or HGTV, questioning God's goodness, afraid of rejection, a lack of self-control with food, sleep, schoolwork, immoral amusements, angry thoughts. Those are specific things that I'm sure all of us can. I swear to that a lot. I need a lot of grace in that area of my life. The question here is, is it possible for a Christian to struggle their whole life with a certain sin and still be saved?

Is it possible? contrary to what I think I initially feel as an answer to that question, the biblical answer is yes.

[35 : 02] To some degree, it is a possibility. It is not likely, but it is a possibility that a person can struggle with some sin, some category of sin their whole life, and yet still be a believer, still be saved when they die.

Now, I'm saying that carefully because I know that within you it's like, 1 John, that would contradict you. well, just hear me out.

I kind of believe in somebody persisting in a certain sin their whole life in varying degrees, and then being saved when they die. I kind of liken that in a sense, or believe that to be like a deathbed conversion, you know, like the thief on the cross, like that happened one time in scripture, okay? And I think the proportion is right. I don't think that happens often. I don't think people on their deathbed come to know Christ often. I think there's a lot of empty professions made on their deathbeds because they're afraid of hell, they're afraid of whatever.

I don't think there's a lot of genuine conversions happening during that time. I think they can happen. We see that in the thief on the cross. They can happen, but it's not often. This is kind of the same thing. I think there are people that are genuinely in love with Christ that struggle in their life, their whole life, with something, some kind of sin, and yet are still saved when they die.

[36 : 32] And the big question kind of behind the question is this. Is it that this person has no faith? Has no faith?

And what you are seeing, the sin that you are seeing, is a manifestation of that. They have no faith. They're not saved. They don't believe. And so they're sinning by unbelief, which is the unpardonable sin, if you don't know.

If you wonder about that, what's that unpardonable sin? It's unbelief. Okay? Or is it that what you're seeing is a manifestation of a small and a weak and a little faith?

Okay? That's the question. Is it just a little bit of, they're not exercising much faith. They don't really trust the Lord very much. They trust the Lord to a degree, but it's not a lot. Okay?

That's really the crux of the matter, I think. Let me prove this to you biblically. Nobody in here in their right mind would say Solomon was unregenerate.

[37 : 37] Okay? He wrote three books in the Old Testament. God answered his prayers specifically and audibly. Okay? So I don't think Solomon would be classified as an unbeliever by anybody in here rationally.

However, 1 Kings chapter 11 verse 1 through 4 says this, Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonianite, and Hittite women from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, you shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after other gods.

Solomon held fast to these in love, and he had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned his heart away.

For it came about when Solomon was old that his wives turned his heart away after other gods, and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He wrote three books in the Old Testament, and that's something written of his life.

[38 : 57] What was the result of this disobedience and this lack of faith in the commandments of God and the mandates of God? Verse 11, later on in that same chapter of 11, says this, so the Lord said to Solomon, because you have done this, and you have not kept my commandments and my statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.

And then the Lord raised up an adversary to Solomon. Okay? It may be the same with us. If you don't exercise by the power of the Holy Spirit inside of you, faith in Christ.

Christ, although every true believer has been freed from the power and the dominion of sin, some of you, I am sad to say, still seem, and I myself in ways, still seem to voluntarily chain myself up again to old sins.

Now, envision that, okay? This is a great illustration I learned a couple of years ago in the Beach Project. If you're in a black cell, a prison cell, and you're chained up within that prison cell, you're a prisoner of that cell, right?

And then all of a sudden, let's say God just punches a hole in the wall, and you can see out, and you're free, like it's big enough for you to crawl through, and you find that your chains have fallen off, and you kind of, you know, you get up, and you waddle over, and your eyes are freaking out because you haven't seen light in a long time, and you look out, and you see these beautiful meadows, and lakes, and mountains, and it's like, wow, this is incredible, and you see Jesus saying, come on, come on, come on, come on, let's go, I'm busting you out, and then you're like, ah, ah, no, you go sit back in the corner, and you try to shackle yourself back up.

[40 : 53] Well, the meadow's open, the field is open, your freedom is right there, but you choose to remain in the shackle, and the thing that you're lacking is faith.

That faith is what enables you to climb out and to go enjoy what God has given to you. He's given you so much, He's given you freedom to all these things, there's no sin that still binds you, it has dominion over you, but the reason why we sin is because we don't exercise faith in God.

We're like the guy in Mark 9 who's like, I believe, but you've got to help my unbelief. I believe, Lord, but I'm weak, man, I'm weak in faith, I need your strength, please, you know, cry out like David was crying, help me, God, come, you know, help me, fill me up with faith.

Let me briefly describe why this is perilous, why this is dangerous to your soul, if this is you, okay? I want to dissuade you, in a sense, from believing that, hey, you know, John just said, and you know, the scripture seems to kind of validate, like if I keep these sins in my life, then I can still, you know, I can kind of have my cake and eat it too, I can be in heaven one day with Jesus, you know, maybe it's not going to be Paul's heaven, but it's going to be, you know, it's going to be good, and yet I can still do what I want to are keeping some pet sin.

No true believer will ever delight in sin. Ever. If it pleases you to think that you can have Christ and your sins, then you're not a believer. Okay?

[42 : 46] The believer may sin in some certain way their whole life, but it will never be enjoyed. Bitterness will be the taste of their every indulgence in that sin, and as the proverb says, Proverbs 20, 17 says, bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth will be filled with gravel.

You may enjoy it for a moment, but it will leave you with a gravelly taste in your mouth. You will never enjoy it. You will be miserable all of your days if you are a Christian and you persist in this sin.

You will be miserable God will starve you intentionally of peace and joy and hope. John Owen said this as well, not to be daily employing the spirit and new nature for the mortifying or killing of sin is to neglect that excellent aid which God has given us against our greatest enemy.

if we neglect to make use of what we have received, God may justly hold his hand from giving us more. His graces as well as his gifts are bestowed on us to use, exercise, and trade with.

Not to be daily killing sin is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God who has furnished us with the principle of doing it.

[44 : 26] That's a loaded quote. Sin has an effect like gravity has a pull. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what size you are, it doesn't matter what color you are, if you jump up, you will come down.

If you're on heroin and you jump up a building and you're super high and you think you can fly, you're going to fall to the ground. It doesn't matter what you think, it doesn't change, gravity is unbiased and impartial.

Sin is the same way. If you're saved, it's not like you get a, you know, it's not like you get a, I want to say get out of something free card, but it's, I don't know what the word is, but I'll explain it to you.

So, the scripture says in Galatians 6, 7 and 8, that you will reap what you sow. You will reap what you sow. Okay, that is the same biblical principle, or biblical law you could say, as nature's law of gravity.

It's impartial, right? Well, sin is the same way. If you sin, you will reap the consequences of that sin. You will reap the consequences. And you may not know the consequences until you're older, or until you die.

[45 : 47] there are things you are robbing yourself of in Christ, in heaven, that you will not know until you get there. And that should make us fear sin all the more, and hate sin all the more, because it keeps us from what Christ has purchased for us with His blood.

You get that? If you continue in some sin, you're going to reap the destruction, and the misery, and the shame of that sin. A good father, right? A good earthly father disciplines his children, that they might learn what is right, and what is good, versus what is wrong, what is bad.

God loves you a thousand times too much to ever allow you just to persist in some sin. That's what He does to those that He despises. Read Romans 1 and see what He does.

See what the worst wrath of God in the New Testament is. The wrath of abandonment. It's when God says, go your own way.

When God says, okay America, go your own way. I'm not going to do anything. I'm not going to stop anything anymore. I'm not going to send you earthquakes like I send other places in the world.

[46 : 58] I'm just going to let you go your own way and enjoy your sin and fill up, as Romans 2 says, fill up your wrath. I'm just adding more to it every day.

There's going to come a day when I reckon with you. That's the worst wrath that God has, is this wrath of abandonment. The idea here is that God's children are not afforded that.

He will never forget about you. He will never stop loving you. And so as a result of that, He will discipline you. When you sin, you will be disciplined. And that is for your good.

He wants to teach you not to blaspheme. He wants to align your steps so that you walk in obedience, so that you reap the blessings of faith, that you reap the blessings of the Holy Spirit inside of you, that love and joy and peace and patience and all.

We talk about that all the time. God wants those things for you to the greatest extent. He says, I have not come, He says, Satan has come to steal, to kill, and to destroy. I have come, on the other hand, to give you life that is abundant.

[48 : 03] Now, part of Him giving you that is teaching you how to get it, and that comes through discipline. Okay. Another thing that I just want to really point out here to dissuade you, again, if that is you, you cannot ever be sure of your salvation.

salvation. Okay. And honestly, like, the line, like, it's so gray, it's so like, you know, like, I mean, the difference between you who have very, very, very little faith, and at times when I have very, very, very little faith, and then an unbeliever who has no faith, is basically nothing.

It's really small, it's just a very thin line of God's grace, is what separates you. Okay, and you,

honestly, if you persist in sin all of your life, how can you possibly be confident of your salvation?

Now, I'm not saying that we're not going to always be warring against sin, like, there's going to be, we're always going to have to war against it, it's always going to be an issue in our lives, in our

hearts, Paul testifies of that, we're always going to be fighting against it, but if there's no measure of victory which you're experiencing, if there's no growing in grace, growing in love, growing in obedience, growing in wisdom, if there's no, honestly, putting off of the old man and putting on of the new, as we see in Colossians, how can you have assurance?

Now, you may still be saved, I'm not saying that the people that don't have assurance can't be saved, I'm saying that you can't really have it, that's the blessing of obedience is assurance, you know, I mean, read 1 Peter 1 to see that, talks about that, you know, God puts you through trials and temptations to purify you of fire, but when you come out, it's like, man, that's that gold, he says, it's that precious stone which can't be taken away from me, it's that imperishable thing which I just cling to, you know, and I think every Christian here is going to be, by God's grace, afforded times when you do endure and when you do see fruit being, you know, barren in your life, it's a grace of God as well.

[50 : 27] You will not be allowed by the spirit within you to enjoy the evil of your sin, and yet, you will not allow yourself the privilege of enjoying the good.

That's you. You won't allow yourself to enjoy the good. It's not that God is keeping things from you, it's that you, by the littleness of your faith, or keeping things from yourself.

So believe in the promises of God. When you come to Him in the Word of God, believe Him.

Believe Him. Believe Him. Amen.

Turn to Matthew 12. Verse 20.

A battered reed he will not break off in a smoldering wick he will not put out until he leads justice to victory.

[51 : 57] Spurgeon, in this book I'm reading, likened that to a battered reed. A battered reed is a picture of the poor sinner when first God begins His operation upon the soul.

He is a bruised reed, almost entirely broken and consumed. There is but little strength in him. Then he says of this smoldering wick, which is like a candle that has a really, really small flicker.

That's a smoldering wick. He says the smoking flax, listen to this, the smoldering wick, I take to be a backsliding Christian.

One who has been a burning and shining light in his day, but by neglect of the means of grace, the withdrawal of God's spirit, and falling into sin, his light has almost gone out.

Not quite completely can it go out, for Christ says, I will not quench it, but it becomes like a lamp when ill supplied with oil, almost useless. It is not extinguished, it still smokes.

[53 : 07] It was a useful lamp once, but now it has become as smoking flax. So that verse is another just biblical, I think, proof text of this reality.

There are people, there are Christians, that because of their backsliding, because of their refusal to kill sin through the means that God has given them, which is the Holy Spirit.

They become like this smoldering wick, useless really, smoking, but not really flaming. they need to repent.

Praise, signing grace. Third question. I know God desires for me to be sanctified, but I honestly don't know how to be.

Okay, this is the exciting, how to be sanctified question. 1 Thessalonians 4, 3 just confirms that, okay, it is the will of God, He says, that you be sanctified.

[54 : 10] That's literally what it says. I mean, it's the will of God. It's very clearly said in Scripture. 1 Thessalonians 4, 3. The most important question of the night is how am I sanctified?

Sanctification, listen to this, is a work of the Holy Spirit. We've said that in you and through your grace driven effort, by which sin is killed and your soul is purified by the transformation which takes place as your mind is renewed by the Word.

That's a lie, it's a mouthful, I know that, but there are a thousand facets involved in sanctification. I can't discuss all of them right now. It's truly inexhaustible, this topic is, but Christ, okay, He knew that it was just overwhelming probably to the disciples in their minds and He prays in John 17 and He explains the heart and the foundation of sanctification in verse 17 of that chapter.

John 17, 17, and He prays this, He prays, sanctify them, in truth. Your Word is truth. If you leave and you don't remember anything else tonight, remember this, God's Word, God's truth, the truth about Christ is how you will be sanctified.

It is how you will kill sin, it is how you will learn to obey Christ, it is how you will be strengthened to fight against the devil when he comes and when he accuses you, when he tries to thwart your

plans, when he tries to afflict you, it is how you will learn to love Christ more in your daily life.
[55 : 38] It is the key to everything is the Word of God. Sanctify them in truth, your Word is truth. The truth of God's Word is the key to this whole issue. Sanctification happens as God's truth is understood and obeyed.

It is that simple. There is a million things to say in that, but it is that fundamentally simple. Christ is the Word.

God's Word. John 1. That's Jesus Christ in Word form, right? His incarnation was in fleshly form. His Word is in Word form. Christ is the Word. And His Word embodies who He is. It reveals His glory like no other medium that we have. If you wish to know God and you wish to become like God, you wish to grow in that genuine image that we talked about at the beginning, then know God's Word.

There's so many good verses to quote right now to just affirm that. The Spirit of God, listen to this, okay? This is the sole function of the Holy Spirit.

[56 : 42] The Spirit of God has been given to you to teach you about Christ. To teach you about Christ. How to love Him, how He hates, what He hates, what is pleasing to Him, what is not pleasing to Him, when and how to obey Him, and so on.

And how does the Spirit teach us these things by bringing to our remembrance what Christ has said? That's John 14, 26. It is straight out of the Scriptures. The Spirit of God teaches you by reminding you of the things that He has said.

So cling to the Word of God. Cling to the Word of God. Let it be the most important thing in your life. Don't lose me here at the end, okay?

We have a couple minutes left. I'm almost finished. I promise. Don't lose me here. This is so, so vital. John 14, 21 says this, He who has my commandments and keeps them, He is who loves me. And he who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will disclose myself to him. I will reveal myself more to him. I will manifest myself to him. To who?

[57 : 50] To the person that has my commandments and keeps him. God. So that is a verse that says, Jesus is saying, there is a direct correlation between you experiencing and being satisfied in me and knowing the Word of God.

You know my Word and you keep that Word, then you get more of me. That's the heart of sanctification. Okay, now I have six things that I'm just going to fly through here at the end. It will be done in five minutes. Six things regarding how a person is sanctified. And they all start with the word be and then they have an R word just to, you know, make it memorable or whatever the word is.

So the first one is, this is how a person is sanctified. The first one is be redeemed. Okay?

Sanctification cannot happen apart from the Holy Spirit. Okay?

It cannot happen apart from you being saved and being given the Holy Spirit. If you are not redeemed, if you do not know Christ, then you need to check out right now and search your heart and plead to God for salvation.

[59 : 02] Okay? Because you can't go any further. Those who are in the flesh, the scripture says in Romans 8, cannot please God. It says, however, you are not in the flesh but in the spirit.

If in need, the spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. Secondly, be repenting. Repent of your sin on the regular, not for forgiveness of sins.

Okay? People, Christians make this mistake a lot. Okay? They pray, Father, forgive me for this sin. He already has. Why are you asking for something he's already given you? He's already forgiven you of all your sins.

He's already absolved you of all your sins. forgiveness. So don't pray for forgiveness. You pray about sin just simply admitting to it.

It's a recognition of your sin. God, I again recognize today that I am in need of your grace because my sin is great. Thank you for your forgiveness.

[60 : 03] Praise him for that. So be repenting. Okay? Repentance glorifies God. Joshua 7 19 proves that.

So be repenting of your sin, but also be laying aside your sin. Okay? Starve them with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.

Starve your lust. I heard John Owen describe the work of killing your lust as a man being crucified. Right?

Imagine your lust. Imagine your sin, your old man in a sense that the Bible talks about. Imagine that as a person on the cross being crucified. Right? And they're initially, when they're initially killed, they're initially not killed, but initially crucified, there's blood spewing on everywhere and they're up there gyrating all over the place and they're probably screaming out and yelling.

But as time goes on and that person loses more and more and more and more and more of their blood, they don't really say very much. Right? So you keep your sin starved, you keep your sin crucified like that.

[61 : 15] I know initially it's going to be like, man, this thing is just coming at me and coming at me and yelling at me and my sin is just in my face. But then over time, as you continue to starve your lusts, it will subside, it will die, it will lose strength, it will lose energy, it will grow weaker and weaker and weaker and weaker.

Another good illustration, this is funny I think, if you guys seen Monty Python and the Holy Grail, hilarious movie, right? There's that one scene when he comes up, kind of sacrilegious, I know, but there's that one scene where he comes up, he's at the bridge and there's that black, like dark knight, right?

He's like, you know, he's like, I gotta pass this way, and he's like, none shall pass, and they get into this sword fight, and he cuts off his right arm and like, fate blood is skewed out of his arm, at first, and he's like, alright, you know, you're defeated, and he says, he's like, no I'm not, but you know, where's my sword, and he picks it up and starts fighting with his left hand, he's all clumsy, cuts off the left arm, cuts off the left leg, right leg, and at last, he's like, just hobbling around like this, you know, he has no arms, no legs, just this torso and a head, and the guy's like, there's nothing left for you to fight with, and he's like, you know, come here, I'm gonna bite you, whatever, it's hilarious, like, that's kind of the same idea as killing your sin, you know, like, I mean, if you continue to just fight it, and stab it, and wound it, and you don't give it any, you don't give it any leeway with you, you don't give it any ground with you, eventually, your lust is gonna be like this torso and head, I mean, it's still alive, like, I mean, you're not,

I mean, yeah, it's still like a lust in your life, it's still like a thing to be, I guess, aware of, but it has no power, you know, just kick it over and walk by, all right, that's the idea, I mean, like, that's what sanctification does, when you employ the Holy Spirit and you employ the work of that Spirit by faith, you will see your lusts, as John Owen is about to say, dead at your feet, just kick it over, thirdly, be remembering God's word, be remembering God's word, memorize the heck out of scripture, okay, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, Colossians 3:16, Psalm 119, 11, says, I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you, Psalm 119, 11, I'm telling you, I'm telling you, okay, you've heard it before, you didn't believe it then, believe it now, the word of God is the key to everything, you learn the word of God, you put this stuff in your mind, you're going to find the sin that you want to struggle with, not that bad, you wave by it as you continue down the narrow road, you kick it under your feet,

God says in 1 John 4, 4, what? Does anybody know that? greater is he who's in you than he who's in the world.

[64 : 29] Greater is he who's in you, Christian, than he who's in the world. I can't get over this sin, it's in my life, it's so strong. No, greater is he who's in you than he who's in the world.

The Holy Spirit within you is greater than that sin. And when you believe that, you will see it come about. Fourthly, three more real quick, be relentless, be relentless, be relentless in your pursuit of God's glory.

Psalm 86, 11 and 12 says this, teach me your way, O Lord, I will walk in your truth. There it is again. Truth, I will walk in your truth, your word.

Unite my heart to fear your name, he says, I will give thanks to you, O Lord, my God, with all my heart, and will glorify your name forever. The psalmist was resilient.

He was relentless in his pursuit of God's glory. Every temptation that you face is surmountable, is defeatable. No temptation has ever taken you, but such as is common to man.

[65 : 40] And God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. It's a promise. But, with every temptation, He will provide a way of escape that you might be able to endure.

1 Corinthians 10, 13. That's a promise. Spurgeon said this, or John Owen said this, Set faith at work on Christ for the killing of your sin.

His blood is the great sovereign remedy for sin-sick souls. Live in this, and you will die a conqueror.

Yes, you will, through the good providence of God, live to see your lusts dead at your feet.

This is signification. Fifthly, whoa, wait a second, Matthew 26, 41. I've got to interject this. Matthew 26, 41 says, keep watching and praying.

Really, keep watching and keep praying continually. There is a vigilance, a steadfastness, in this sanctification.

[66 : 53] Matthew 7, 14 says to enter by the narrow gate, right? It says that the way is hard, and it's narrow, that leads to eternal life, and few there be that find it.

That word hard, okay, means troubling, it means distressful. So I say this, only those with the aid of the Holy Spirit can make it.

Only those who have seen Christ by faith will endure. This relentlessness that we're talking about right here is going to be what leads to your assurance.

If you find yourself losing all confidence in you and putting all confidence in Christ, you will find yourself victorious. You will find yourself relentless.

And you will find yourself enduring to the end and being saved triumphantly. And being confident when you die.

[67 : 57] And being confident as you live in God. Fifthly, be rejoicing. Be rejoicing.

Paul beckons us in Philippians 4, 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice. The Christian can always rejoice.

You say, that's impossible. Life sucks sometimes. The Christian can always rejoice. Why? Because Christ is always His Savior.

That trumps every trial. There is never a moment to despair. Is your soul sick with sin? Rejoice in the same Savior as the chief of sinners.

Are you downtrodden? Are you heavy hearted? Rejoice. Our Savior was Himself well acquainted with grief and with many sorrows and yet He overcame all of them for you. In the words of Nehemiah chapter 8 verse 10 The joy of the Lord is your strength.

[69 : 09] The joy of the Lord is your strength. It's a beautiful Old Testament verse. It's hidden back there in Nehemiah. Lastly, this is for fun, be reminding be reminding be reminding Satan as often as you like that he is an already defeated foe.

Say with Paul, if God is for us, who can be against us? What can mere man do to me? It's kind of this arrogance but he says, hey, if you're going to boast, boast in Christ.

So I'm kind of arrogant right now. And I'm not going to repent of that. You feel that confidence welling up within you? That is merely the Spirit energizing your soul for the slaughtering of Satan and of your lusts and readying your heart for praise of our conquering Christ.

I'm going to end with a quote and then we're done. I'll wait in ten minutes. Sorry. Remember, you are God's sword. His instrument. I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name.

In greatest measure, according to the purity and the perfection of the instrument. Hear that again. In greatest measure, according to the purity and the perfection of the instrument will be the success. It is not great talents.

[70 : 36] God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. You need to cling to that. It is not great talents that God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus.

A holy man is an awful weapon in the hand of God. In Philippians 1.6 it says, He that began a good work in you will perfect them until the day of Christ Jesus.

So if you're a Christian, what I'm talking about, although it seems lofty and crazy, is a sure thing.

He's a dream. He's a dream. He's a dream. He's a dream. Thank you.