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How You Kill Sin (part 1)

Romans 8:13

by Tim Conway

Few things in this life have the ability to impact the very core of our Christian experience more than mastering this verse. May God help us realize to this. It is so significant that the well known puritan John Owen wrote an 86 pg book on this one verse. What verse am I talking about? Some of you already know. I'm talking about Romans 8, verse 13. Let's read it together. "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." Now, I want to read that again. It is so short that we can't hardly help but read that again. Now listen, right now try to sweep the cares of this world and all the other stuff right out of here. May God put those things out. Try to clear the mind. May God give us calm children and the ability to focus. If you will do this as we start out, try to take in this word. If you live according to the flesh. If *you* live, according to the flesh, *you* will die. But if by the Spirit *you*, you see how much of this has to do with *you*? If by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.

I've entitled my sermon how *you*, that had to be in the title, how *you* kill sin, part one. I don't know how many parts yet there is going to be, but this is part one. Lord willing, this will be the emphasis of this series. How do Christians kill sin? How do you do it and how do I do it.

[Good morning brother Freddy. I can always tell when brother Freddy is not here. I feel his presence. In a good way I do. That means you bring certain gifts to this assembly that are imperative. Well, they're helpful. None of us are ever beyond being expendable.]

So here it is. We are going to be dealing with how do you kill sin. But I don't even feel like I can begin to deal with that until I first try to develop some sort of basic working definition of the text. Do you know what I mean when I say a basic working definition? I mean this. What's it saying? I know we can all look at the text and read it. I know you can look at the words and you can see what it says. But what does it mean by what it says? Because I'll tell you this, I don't think there are too many people in the world that can read that text and tell you what it means. You know we as Christians have some idea of what it's saying there because of what we've been exposed to. But there are concepts there that the average person does not know and I bet if I asked you to bring of a piece of paper right now and write an essay on what these things mean you might even find these things a little difficult to describe. So we need this working definition. You know what I want us to do? I want us to create a picture, something living. I mean Gods word is living, its real, it's alive. And I want it to be that to us. I want to create a picture we can carry around with us in our minds. I want you to really be able to lay your eyes on these words and to see this verse; I want it to be real to us.

Here we go. Let's look at it. Take for instance this first phrase. You know what I would like you to do? I would like you just to camp right here with your bibles open to Romans 8:13 the whole time. If I read other verses I will read them to you, I will try to read them clearly and repeat them and talk to you about them so you understand. But I want you to keep your bibles right here, Romans 8, verse 13, I want your eyes to keep going back to that verse. I want you to become familiar with it, I want you to know it, I want you to see it, and I want you to understand it. There's nothing more important than that as Christians folks, when it comes to our lives, when it comes to how to live, when it comes to truth we don't get it from the newspaper, we don't get it off the streets, and I'll tell you what you don't get it from my opinions. I am not interested in telling you my opinions or another mans opinions about this word. I want the word of God to basically bring home the word of God. I want to interpret scripture by scripture and leave you here with a solid realization about what this means. What God means when God says this. This is the apostle Paul writing but you need to remember this: this is not a common letter, this is no ordinary writing here, this is God inspired turf folks. You go here your on holy ground, so it behooves us to understand this.

Okay, first phrase, you guys see what it is. First phrase, if you live according to the flesh, lets stop right there. We're not going to go any further than that for this moment. I want you guys to grasp this; people who live according to the flesh are real people. You say, of course they are. You know what can happen to us? You know what can happen to us who like to tout our Calvinism and be all theological and everything? The word of God can often times be awfully theologically abstract. We have these concepts and we have our systematic theologies, but we lose the sense that this stuff is real! It becomes more fodder for debate. But that's not why God gave us this. This is real folks! It's true. This describes people you and I know. It may describe you.

Listen, there's real flesh and blood behind those who live according to the flesh. Some of your own children who you love have this identity, some of your husbands, some of your wives, some of your friends. These are real people, they think. I mean think about this folks, they're out there. They have homes, they have addresses, they have lives, they have fears, they're real, and they're somewhere. And right now, they have minds, they're awake. Most people in San Antonio are awake right now and they're out there and they're living. They're here, they're there, they're going this way, and they're going that way. They're watching this, and they're out there. And they're minds are active right now, and they're awake and they're thinking certain thoughts and something is happening in they're minds. And they're there. This isn't just some writing in a book, this is a description of real people you and I know, and see, and they're around us. And this is the thing; they live according to the flesh. What do we make of that? What does it mean that they live according to the flesh? What should we think when we hear that? Because you know what, if I just walk into HEB somewhere and I start walking up and down the aisles and I say, Ma'am what does it mean to live according to the flesh? "Flesh? I mean I'm in this body." That's not what it means. When Paul says if you live according to the flesh, he's not saying if you live in a human body. That is not what he's saying. You know what he's saying? Let's look at Romans 8 and verse 7. You know why I want you to look back there? The same person is being described, same one. Romans 8:5, those

who live according to the flesh, that's the same description, if you live according to the flesh you will die. Here they are those who live according the flesh, same people. And what do they do? They set their minds on the things of the flesh. Okay, but what does that mean? Well, go to verse six. To set the mind on the flesh is death. Well that's what Paul has already told us in Romans 8:13, right? If you live according to the flesh, you'll die. That's what we have here. Okay, we have all that so far, but that still doesn't tell us what it means so go to verse seven. For the mind that is set on the flesh, remember those that have their minds set on the flesh are those who live according to the flesh, the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. And here's how the hostility shows itself for it does not submit to Gods law, indeed it cannot. There you have it. Those who live according to the flesh do what? Do not submit to Gods law. You know who they are? There those people who, when it's all said and done, they just don't make it their highest priority to do what God said they should do. Christ's commandments just aren't important to them. These are the people that are out there. They're real people. You can put faces on the. They're out there right now. They're minds are at work right now, they're living, they're thinking, they're breathing right now. You know who I'm talking about. This is your mother, your coworker, your boss, that friend, your child. You know these people, they're around us. Right now, they're minds are working like this. Do you realize what I'm telling you here? They're not out their necessarily with a mindset to become cannibals or rapists, or to go and be serial killers. They just simply have mindsets right now, they are thinking thoughts right now, they have ambitions, they have cares, concerns, anxieties, fears, hopes, and they're thinking about what they desire, and how to achieve things, and how I'm going somewhere today and were going to visit over here, and we're doing this, but there is largely an absence of any real concern about what God wants them to do with their life. That's who I'm talking about, these are the people I'm describing for you, and they're out there. They just really don't care about what Christ wants. You know what? They might be nice people, they might be funny people, they might be likable people, they might be moral people, they might dress nice, but bottom line, when you boil it all down, here is the issue: submitting to God to them does not matter. And I want you guys to get that. When we talk from here on out about living according to the flesh, I want you every time, every one of you to say, "oh yeah, I know what that is, that's all those people I know who don't submit to God." And that might be yourself; you might be one of those. But I want you to have that, it is all those people who don't care what God has to say they just live any old way they want. Now you guys have a grasp on that right? You won't forget that, never again in your lives right? When I hear about people that live in the flesh, people that live according to the flesh, people that are in the flesh, people that have their minds set on the flesh, I am going to remember this about them, when I see flesh I realize this: its speaking about the nature of man that is unsubmitive to God. And that is just bottom line when you boil it all down it is corrupt sinful, rebellious, unsubmitive nature of man. It just simply, doesn't care what God has to say. And we can all identify with that. You know how we can? Because this is how we all by nature are, and if there are any people in this room who care about what God has to say its because there has been such a radical transformation in your life that you have ended up that way. It isn't because you've made yourself that way, or you were born that way, or because you just happen to be more special than other people. If you care what God says, it is because God has had mercy on you and given you a new heart.

So now we have the right idea and it's safe to go forward. Now look at the second phrase in Romans 8:13 look at those three words. You will die. Now what should that prompt us to think about? What image should that conjure up in our minds? As we read our bibles we really need to ask ourselves that all the time. What picture are these words and these phrases and these concepts really trying to bring to life before my eyes? Brethren, how easy it is for us to get lost in theology and religious words and miss the substance. Do you see where it says in verse 13 you will die? Do you all see that? If you live according to the flesh you will die. What does that phrase mean? Well, you might think to yourself, "Hey, I know exactly what that means." Let me tell you something about that phrase. It is used in our bibles to convey two very different meanings; we are going to look at those meanings in just a moment. But you see, when you take that phrase just by itself "you will die" and you take it out of context and you just lay it out there. [18:30]

You know you placard it up here... You will die! All by itself it's impossible to know which of the two biblical meanings it carries, right? It's kind of like the word we spell B-O-W. I mean what's that word B-O-W? Well, it depends if I'm bent over praying to God or I'm out in the field hunting deer with a quiver on my back full of arrows. Whether it's bow or bow can't be discerned if you just put the word up here. What do you need in order to figure out what it means? You need some context. The same thing is true when you get this phrase, "You will die". There are two possible meanings, which one does it have? Well we're going to look at the context, but you know what we better do first? We better look at what the two meanings are and then we'll go to the context and see which one fits. That a safe way to approach that? Okay." You will die". Let's look at the first way this phrase is used in our bibles. Now again stay right there, I'm going to go to the Old Testament and read a verse to you. This one comes out of 2 Kings 20 in verse 1, "In those days", and our little phrase is in this verse. I'll just tell you that so be watching out for it. "In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death and Isaiah the prophet", and that's the famous Isaiah the prophet, the one who wrote the prophecy that we know very well, "The son of Amos came to him and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord, Set your house in order for'", and here it is, here's our phrase "You shall die". It's the same expression we have in 8:13, "...you will die." What does that mean here in 2 Kings 20? Well, we have some clues for one thing. This is very important. It's referring to the sort of death that a righteous person experiences. How do I know Hezekiah's a righteous person? Well, maybe you don't know Hezekiah very well, but both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles state clearly that Hezekiah was a man who was good and righteous and faithful. He was a king of Judah who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. So when Isaiah tells him "you will die" it's obviously a death that is not limited to evil men only. Fair assumption? That's important. Second, this death is clearly being brought on by what? I mean what was happening to Hezekiah at the time? He was sick. Okay, sickness. Here's a question for you. What kind of death do good men die that can be caused by sickness? You guys ever heard of any death like that? Do you know of any good men? You know of any good men that have died? Frank Boydston. Yeah, he was a Christian, he was a good man. When God saves somebody, they become a Christian; He's in the very business of making them into good men. Frank Boydston died. Good man, Died. He got sick. What kind of death do good men die? That it's possible to die when you get

sick? Now it's possible to die for other reasons too. There could be trauma. I mean folks; we're talking about the death we all know. We're talking about the death that we see all around us. We're talking about physical death, the death of this mortal body.

Now I want you to understand this death a little bit. When we die this type of natural death, this physical death, there is a separation. The spirit leaves the body and at that point the body dies. You remember how James said it? He said something like "Just as the body apart from the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead", right? But his point there in his illustration... when you come to a place where the spirit separates from the body, the bodies dead. That's the death we know about. The spirit doesn't die, the spirit just separates from the body. The spirit lives, the bodies dead. That's natural death. When Isaiah said "Hezekiah get your house in order", now I know his life was extended 15 years, but after 15 years it still came true folks. You will die. You know what the thing is about that death? All men die that death, all men. There are no exceptions! All of them. If I say to you "you will die", you will die. You will die. I'm going to be right 100% of the time, am I not? I mean it doesn't matter. You can be a good man, bad man, black man, white man, red man skinny man, purple man. It doesn't matter. You are going to die. And if I tell you you're going to die I'm going to be 100% right. There's not a one of you in here that won't. How do I know that? Well you know one thing? All I have to do is look around to see that that's true. I mean you guys produce one person that has ever lived on the face of this earth that was born more than one hundred and fifty years ago more than one hundred and twenty years ago. Go find one. There not out there. You know why? Because it doesn't matter if there a Christian or not a Christian, they die this kind of death. And you know what? I can just use my eyes and tell you that. You could just use your eyes and tell you that. But I'll tell you that based on biblical basis. You ever hear Hebrews 9:27? Listen to what that says, "It is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment." Now did you hear that? Listen to what this says, "Appointed for man to die, *after* that comes judgment." So you have death, physical death. After it comes judgment. So before the judgment all men die once. Listen to what it says, "It is appointed for man..." All who fall under the category of man and if that happens to describe you, you have an appointment that you must keep with this kind of physical death. There are no exceptions, there are no exemptions. Don't talk to me about Elijah and Enoch. You're not going to miss your appointment, folks, unless the lord comes first it's there for you. Even god-fearing men like Hezekiah didn't miss it. As long as you're a man the death of the body that you now walk around in is certain. Unless the Lord comes first there's an appointed time. When that body you are in right now right here, the one you're sitting in right now, it's going to lie dead and stiff and cold. It's going to happen. People don't like to think about it, but it's going to happen. You can exercise it; you can try to trim it up. Brother Charles you can get up early in the morning, use your walking sticks, and try to keep it firm and fit. But I'm telling you this, that body you're in brother. Some of us in this room I don't doubt are going to see that thing lying cold and dead and stiff in a coffin one day. We saw Johnny's there, we're going to see Charles there unless I go before you brother, which is a very real possibility. It's going to happen. So! This could be Paul's meaning of "you will die" in Romans 8:31 and I stress it could be. This is one of our two options.

But! There is another way men die in the bible. There is another meaning to “you will die”. I’m talking about a far, far more dreadful death. Oh how men fear physical death when in reality, in all reality there is a much more fearsome death awaiting many. A death the apostle John describes for us with graphic and vivid imagery in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Now listen, listen to me. Here is the inspired picture of this event. Revelation 20, verse 11 “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who is seated on it. And I saw the dead, great and small.” Here they are folks, there all there. The great and small and they’re standing before the throne. “And the dead were judged... according to what they had done.” Verse 14, “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. The lake of fire and if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life he was thrown into the lake of fire.” Revelations 21:8 “The cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, all liars, they’re portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur which is the second death.” Now let me tell you something about the second death. All men have an appointment with the first death. All men. We saw that in Hebrews 9:27, but concerning the second death Jesus Himself says, “The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.” Not everyone dies the second death. Some will conquer and will not be hurt by that death. And there is only one way to conquer and that is by the blood of the Lamb of God which was poured out specifically to save men and women from that second death, from the lake of fire, from the almighty wrath of God, from eternal conscious punishment and we do! Folks, that’s why we get stirred up in this church, that’s the reason to get stirred up about these songs because this Lamb of God, praise the Lamb, has set many of us free from that death. We are freed from it. It won’t hurt us, but its going to hurt some. And it’s going to be a hurt unlike any hurt you ever imagined in your life. We glory in the Lamb of God because we have been saved from the second death and He has made some of us to be conquerors. We have been born-again, resurrected to the newness of life and the second death now has no power over us. And we glory in the Lamb for that.

Now listen to me. Christ’s death does not spare me or anyone other Christian from the first death. Oh, but it definitely takes the sting out of it because the sting of death is sin. Oh death where is your sting? We are more than conquerors folks. There is no death the second time around, but there is a death the first time around but the sting of that death is sin. And if the blood of the Lamb washed away the guilt of my sin guess what the first death does? It doesn’t sting me, it frees me to go away and lay in my Savior’s arms! So even know His death doesn’t spare me from it, it’s not something, I don’t have to fear either of the deaths. Oh, but if you are in your sin, you better fear. You better fear. Now here’s the thing that I want you to see... First death, who escapes it? No one. Second death, who escapes it? So what you guys just told me is, nobody escapes first death, the righteous escape the second death. Okay. So here’s the conclusion to the matter. Now really lock into this, because this will really help you guys as you read your bibles. Here’s the conclusion to the matter... whenever you find a death spoken of in the bible that is a death that can be escaped you know it isn’t talking about physical death, Hebrews 9:27 makes it very clear, none escape that. If a death is presented that can be escaped or if a death is presented that only some and not all are cursed with then it must be what we call spiritual death, eternal death, the second death, the lake of fire, unending

conscious punishment. So here's a question for you. In Romans 8:13, Paul is clearly talking of a death that only *some* do endure, because do you see it? He says if you live according to the flesh you will die! However or but or for you have another group, "If by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live." So if this is a death, and it is, that some escape but some have happen to them. Clearly, which death is it speaking of? The second. Are you guys beginning to grasp the weight of this? Folks, do you realize what I'm saying to you? Living according to the flesh is a picture of that person who lives life just wanting to do things their own way. Not Gods way! They don't submit to God, that's what Romans 8:7 says. And you can do this, just live your life ignoring what God says, just do what you want to do, just have it your own way and in the end I will tell you this, God with specific intention and purpose will lay hold on you and plunge you in that lake of fire and He will do it with purpose and He will do it to harm you. You better believe that! You see what I'm talking about here? I am not describing to you here Adolph Hitlers, serial killers, and child molesters! I am describing the little child who does not want to be told what to do. I am describing the teenager who does not like authority. I am describing the little grandmother who simply wants to live her life the way she wants to live her life. You say, "Is God going to throw old grandmothers who just, you know, live their life the way they want to? Is he going to plunge them in the lake of fire? Yep. That's what the scripture says. "Well, what kind of monster is God?" that's what people think. Listen, you apparently missed what submitting to God is in Romans 8:7. Your bible may say enmity or hostility, which is the word for hatred. If you hate God, he will destroy you in the end. If you live according to the flesh you are living a life that is hateful to God. I know you know people that live in the flesh that are nice people. You like them; you like being around them. They're funny people. I don't deny that. And I don't deny that they're likable or funny or nice. I'm just telling you this, the great wretchedness of mankind, oh it can be seen in an Adolph Hitler, but it's seen in that little child that tells their mother "no."

You know what? We have people out there; think about this, we have people out there all over. They just casually lie. They just virtually thoughtlessly cheat on their taxes. They don't care, they fornicate. You know you talk to a woman, she's on her third marriage, I just fell out of love with the first two husbands. You did? Never a thought, God says you shall not commit adultery. Never a thought that God says it's for these things the wrath of God is coming. Never a thought that God says I hate divorce! You see, they just want it their way. Its not that their just walking around all the time with their fist held up high. They're just living their lives and they don't want to know what God says, they aren't interested in what he says. They don't want that word in their life. They don't want that accountability in their life. They don't want that responsibility in their life. They are basically just set on a course where they want to live for themselves. They want to live their own way. They just want to live. Folks, this is the person that is going to endure such a horrific death, words just utterly fail me to describe. It's fearsome. Listen, you know this is true. People that just despise, they think little of the word, little of the commandments, little of the law, little of their sin. You know what the amazing thing is? They think so little of all this that they think somehow in the end, somehow, some way by some means, they think that they wont die. They think they're going to miss it. I mean, how many people have we talked to, they will admit to you, they lie. They're going to

miss the lake of fire in their estimation. Every man has this scheme. Every man has this plan. Every man has purposed somehow, he's going to miss that lake of fire. I'm telling you this folks, the word of God says if you live according to the flesh, if you live just basically blowing off what God says you are heading for that lake of fire. And you know what the bible says? God isn't going to regard you in the end. He doesn't prefer one person over another. Have you ever read this? He is no respecter of men. All you have to do is show up on judgment day, your works are going to be brought out and be examined. And all those works have to prove! Its not that you were a commander in a Nazi concentration camp. All they have to prove is that you thought lightly of what God said. That's all they have to prove and you're done. You are done! Depart! And they will cast you in there! And all your pleadings and cries for pity and mercy. You've missed your time. You're time to cry out was now. But you didn't only blow off what God said about adultery and fornication and lying and thievery and covetousness and idolatry, you blew off what he said about coming to his Son. You blew off his appeals to you when you had time. But now it's too late.

You say pastor I don't believe that. I don't believe what you're saying. This is God's word. You live according to the flesh you will die. I now some of you are thinking here, now catch this, because I'm done here but I have to make this point. Because some of you are sitting here and saying, "Now brother that's nice and everything, that's right. That's a good warning. That's needful. But you know what? I'm a Christian and I showed up today because I heard because I heard on Wednesday that you were going to be preaching on how I am to kill sin as a Christian. And I haven't heard anything you've said yet that is necessarily or specifically going to help me. Listen, the first step to how I kill sin is I have to get out of the first category in Romans 8:13 and get into the second category. I got to get out of that group that's living according to the flesh that's going to die, and I got to get over into that other group. And I wanted to describe the first group in good detail so you could see whether you are there or not. And here's the second thing, here's what some people are going to do, which I don't want you to do, they are going to go to this text and say, "Okay if I'm in the first part of this and those living according to the flesh, those who are unsubmitive to God you will die . If that describes me I'm going to die. Then they go to the second part and they look at that and say, "Okay, over in the second part you have the people who will live," right? Isn't that what Romans 8:13 has? First category there, they die. Second category, they live. Now what somebody is going to do is look at this and say, "Ah, I realize my life really is characterized by not wanting God involved, I know I've broken his commands. I don't want to die. I don't want to face this second death. So I need to escape that, I need to get in that second group. Those in the second group are the ones who put to death the deeds of the flesh, so I guess the way to jump over into the second group is to try to put to death the deeds of the flesh." There's a problem with that thinking, you know what that problem is? If you are currently living according to the flesh you have a problem. You know what the problem is? Let me ask you this. Would killing sin, putting to death the deeds of the flesh, putting to death the deeds of the body, would that be a good thing? Would putting to death sin be a good thing? Would it in fact be submitting to God? Yes, When Christians put to death sin that is submitting to God.

Here's the thing, look in your bibles at Romans 8:7 where we already were, and what is the last word in Romans 8:7? Can not. Folks, if you are in the flesh, if you are living according to the flesh, for you to all of a sudden move into the second category would be for you to all of a sudden become a person that's submitting to God. But you see the problem, you cannot. See folks, if you're walking in the flesh you cannot submit to God. You cannot do good. Which certainly means you cannot put sin to death. The way to get over to the second group is not to grit your teeth and by your own will power do this. Folks, if you try that all you're going to end up with is frustration, dead hypocrisy and legalism and just the husk of any religion that you might try to weave out of that. It won't be any good. The way you jump from the first to the second, the way you become prepared, the first step to putting to death the deeds of the body is not simply to decide you want to jump over there.

You see that, you *cannot*. You say, that puts me in a bad place. That puts me in a bad situation. Listen folks, here is the thing; you must be a Christian before you can live like a Christian. You must be a son of God *first* before you can live like a son, otherwise all your attempts to kill sin will be artificial, imitations at best, and you can't try to live like a son of God to make yourself into a son of God. Folks you pass from that category of you will die to that category you will live *only* if Christ in your place suffers that death that was pronounced upon you in that first category. That's the only way. If you were to escape the second death, if you were to escape the flesh, if you were to escape the sentence you will die! You must find your way to the cross. No other way. Only those who do so are worthy to bear and wear the name Christian. That first true touch of the cross cleanses away all the guilt of all your sin, every single one of them. Do you realize this? I want to leave you with this truth today; you can never kill a sin that wasn't already forgiven. That's it folks, the cross. You lay hold upon that cross and such glory and mercy, the sin is washed away. And I'm telling you this, you look to that cross you trust what Christ did there, and it releases a sin-killing power. It releases the Spirit of God to indwell. You know folks, you do that, you find that cross, you touch it, and you lay hold of it. You will feel, you will experience healing in that cross. There is potency about that cross; there is an effectual dispersing of that divine medicine that heals you of your sicknesses that come out of that. That's it. That's the first step. How do you kill sin? You got to be a Christian.

[Father, I pray that there would be a readiness for this church to receive your instruction, what is of you, not what is of me but what is of you, what's of your word, what is real about fighting sin. I pray that this church would be ready to take that in and be ready to live it, to have it, to learn from it, I pray in Christ's name. Amen. You're dismissed.]