

Why Must We Kill Sin? How Can We?

Romans 8:12-17

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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. - Romans 8:13, ESV

[NOTE: [Tim Challies](#) has been one of my favorite bloggers for years. This devotional reflects much of what I have learned from him and is a tribute of sorts to his excellent blogging.]

"Be killing sin or sin will be killing you." - John Owen

The Christian life is a life-long battle against sin. Many people would like to pretend or teach otherwise. In fact, some people would look at what has been written so far in this post and scream "legalism!" But it's not legalistic; it's reality. Those of us who love the Lord and have been called to faith in Christ struggle with sin and against sin for the rest of our lives.

Should we just give up and accept sin as a "fact of life" and quit fighting it? No! Here are seven reasons why we must be killing sin:

1. Sin is a destructive distortion of God's good creation. Sin is a cancer, a distortion of all that God has made to be good and right. Sin takes God's good gifts- pleasure, power, relationships, food, money, etc. - and twists them toward corrosive ends.

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." - Romans 8:20-21, ESV

2. Sin is enslaving. Sin is addictive and enslaving. Satan uses sin to trap us and fool us into doing his will, even to our own hurt. Long after sin stops keeping its promises and ceases to be enjoyable, it holds us firmly in its grip.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin." - John 8:34, ESV

3. Sin is offensive to God. God hates sin, and if we love God, we must hate sin, too. God hates sin because it mars and corrodes His good creation. It leads His loyal subjects into disloyalty, distorts His truth into error, enslaves His children to futility and divides His kingdom into petty factions of self-interest and folly. We must learn to hate sin for the very reasons that God hates it.

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

4. Sin short-circuits our fruitfulness and effectiveness. How many ministries have been derailed by sin? How much Christian testimony has been short-circuited by hypocrisy? How many Christian marriages have been destroyed by deception, resentment and infidelity? How

many children raised in the church and in Christian homes have walked away from God because of the sin they have seen in their parents and church leaders?

"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful." - Matthew 13:22, ESV

5. Sin is contrary to God's holy character. Believers are being transformed into the image of Christ, who is the perfect reflection of God's holy character. Sin is contrary to God's holy character and thus contrary to God's redemptive purposes for us in Christ.

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." - 2 Cor. 3:18, ESV

6. Sin poisons all of our relationships. Every relationship we have has been and is being poisoned in some way by sin: in the church, at the workplace, in the home, in friendships. We see again and again the effects of pride, envy, covetousness, resentment, distrust, lust, deception, worry, insecurity and gossip in all relations. If we love people and value our relationships, then we must hate sin and seek to uproot and destroy it.

"For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." - Romans 13:9-10, ESV

7. Sin shipwrecks and kills even professing believers. Ultimately, we have all been eye-witnesses to the power of sin to shipwreck and destroy professing believers. We cannot always know the eternal destiny of these professing Christians. We cannot know if they were false professors or sincere believers who became overcome by besetting sin. But the Bible makes it clear that professing believers are destroyed by sin either as a final act of Fatherly discipline or as a way of revealing their hypocrisy to the world.

" . . . wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." - 1 Timothy 1:18-20, ESV

So, we should be killing sin, but how? How do we mortify the flesh? Here are seven ways to kill sin:

1. We kill sin only by the power of God. We are powerless over sin in our own strength, but God has the power to make us strong and holy. To fight sin in our own strength is not only folly but also pride and thus sin.

" . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." - Philippians 2:12-13, ESV

2. We kill sin through the application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our lives. As we remember who we are in Christ, recall the wonder of our redemption, meditate on all of the Gospel promises of God and seek to know Christ more and more, our motivation and empowerment toward true holiness grows.

"For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions." - Romans 6:10-12, ESV

3. We kill sin through radical self-denial and preventative measures. Yet we must also be very practical and even ruthlessly so. If we know ourselves and our tendencies toward temptation and sin, we must radically cut off the easy avenues and build barriers to sin wherever possible. This might mean going without certain things we enjoy or think we need. So be it. The victory is worth the sacrifices.

"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." - Matthew 5:30, ESV

4, We kill sin in confession to one another. Most of us like to have people like us and think well of us. Often, this can keep us from confessing our sins to each other for fear or looking bad, losing face or being ashamed. We sinners need to confess and pray for each other.

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

5. We kill sin in prayer. We pray in earnest alone, with and for each other in pairs and small groups, and together as a body of Christ in corporate worship. God hears and answers and heals and forgives.

". . . praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints . . ." - Ephesians 6:18, ESV

6. We kill sin through the Word. The Word of God lays us open and exposes our sin and also brings the remedy of forgiveness for our sin. It shows us Christ our Redeemer and gives us wisdom for living well. We need to read, meditate, study and ponder the Word daily, faithfully, and regularly, together with other believers.

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." - Hebrews 4:12, ESV

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." - 2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV

7. We kill sin in worship and fellowship with other believers. No battle is ever fought by one soldier alone. The body of Christ is not made up of one member alone. We are called to each other and we need to worship, fellowship, pray, serve, and live life together.

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." - Matthew 18:20, ESV

Killing sin is a life-long calling and many times we can feel overwhelmed and defeated by the unfinished task. In those moments, we need to remember that God is faithful and that this is His work. He is not finished and He never lets go of us!