

Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers

If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live (Rom. 8:13b; KJV)

Lecture 1 – The Foundation of Mortification

A Brief Intro to this Treatise

I. Published in 1656

II. Result of preaching ministry every other Lord's Day at Oxford:

"Having preached on this subject unto some comfortable success, through the grace of Him that administereth seed to the sower, I was pressed by sundry persons, in whose hearts are the ways of God, thus to publish what I had delivered" (Preface, 3).

"Owen showed me my inside—my heart—as no one had ever done before. Sin, he told me, is a blind, anti-God, egocentric energy in the fallen human spiritual system, ever fomenting self-centered and self-deceiving desires, ambitions, purposes, plans, attitudes, and behaviors. Now that I was a regenerate believer, born again, a new creation in Christ, sin that formerly dominated me had been dethroned but was not yet destroyed. It was marauding within me all the time, bringing back sinful desires that I hoped I had seen the last of, and twisting my new desires for God and godliness out of shape so that they became pride-perverted too. Lifelong conflict with the besetting sins that besetting sin generates was what I must expect" (Packer, "God's Chemo for My Cancered Soul").

III. Reasons for Writing (Preface, 3)

1. People's disability in dealing with temptations
2. Contemporary direction on mortification was legalistic

**For a brief summary of this treatise see Sinclair Ferguson, John Owen on the Christian Life, 145–153.*

Outline of Chapter 1 (5–9)

If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live (Rom. 8:13b; KJV)

I. The Conditionality: "If ye" (6)

Does "if" signify *uncertainty* or *certainty*?

II. The Persons: “Ye” (6–7)

Of whom does Paul speak when he says, “If ye/you . . . mortify . . . ye/you shall live?”

Owen’s first thesis in this treatise: *“The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin”* (7).

III. The Efficient Cause: “Through the Spirit” (7)

Who is the “Spirit” of whom Paul speaks?

Owen’s second thesis in this treatise: *“Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of a self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world”* (7).

IV. The Duty: “Mortify the deeds of the body” (7–8)

A. What is “the body?”

B. What are “the deeds of the body?”

C. What is it to “mortify?”

V. The Promise: “Ye shall live” (8–9)

“The vigour, and power, and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh” (9).