

Taking God Seriously: Man and Sin

The Doctrine of Man

1. Why study man after studying the doctrine of God?
 - a. The knowledge of God and man are connected.
 - i. Calvin writes, “Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves.”¹
 - ii. Man lives, and moves, and has his being in God (Acts. 17:28), and therefore, rightly looks to God as the Giver of life.
 1. Since God is the Creator, He is the standard to which man is to live.
 - b. The knowledge of God leads to a correct knowledge of man.
 - i. Man always seems righteous, holy, upright, and wise when he looks only to himself.² It is only when he looks to God that he sees himself correctly.
 1. Man will always find a way to justify his feelings and actions so long as he compares himself to other men.
 2. Calvin writes, “man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God’s majesty.”³
 - ii. Biblical examples:
 1. Genesis 18:
 - a. Abraham intercedes on behalf of Sodom to the Lord, pleading for the righteous who would be destroyed if the Lord were to sweep away the city (no righteous people were found, though the Lord delivered Lot and his family).
 - b. Abraham says, “Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27).
 - c. He recognizes his lowly position as he speaks to the Lord of all.
 2. Job 42:
 - a. Job was afflicted by Satan and does not sin against the Lord with his mouth (Job 1:22; 2:10).
 - b. When his friends arrive, he seeks to justify himself, and desires to make his case before God. However, when God arrives and calls him to account for the created order, Job is silenced.

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 35.

² *Ibid.* 37.

³ *Ibid.* 39.

- c. Job rightly declares, “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).
 - d. It is when Job sees the Lord that he has a correct view of himself.
 - 3. Isaiah 6:
 - a. The prophet Isaiah sees himself correctly only when he is in the presence of the holy God.
 - b. Upon entering the presence of God, Isaiah rightly declares a curse upon himself, for he is a man of unclean lips and dwells in the midst of a people of unclean lips (Is. 6:5).
 - c. The study of Christ and the Holy Spirit in their Person and Work are intimately connected to man’s redemption.
 - i. In order to understand what Christ accomplished and the crucial role of the Holy Spirit, one must understand why the work was necessary in the first place. This involves a correct understanding of man, the fall, and the nature of sin.
 - ii. Therefore, the doctrine of man logically follows the doctrine of God with Christology and Pneumatology following.
2. In the beginning: the creation of man (Gen. 1-2).
- a. The creation of man is the climax of the creation account.
 - i. Berkhof notes five distinctions in the creation of man from the rest of the created order⁴:
 - 1. Man’s creation was preceded by a solemn divine counsel.
 - a. There is a pause in the creation account in Genesis 1:26-27, with God speaking intra-Trinitarian about the upcoming creation of man. This does not take place for any other creature.
 - 2. The creation of man was in the strictest sense of the word an immediate act of God.
 - a. Once God had created the initial world, He then used the world to create, as He says, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures...” (Gen. 1:24). However, there are no mediating material in the creation of man in total.
 - b. It must be noted that dust was used to form man, but the creation of the eternal soul lacked any mediating material.
 - 3. In distinction from the lower creatures, man was created after a divine type.
 - a. Man, unlike any other creature, is made in the image of God, after the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27).

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: with a Complete Textual Index* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), 182-183.

4. The two different elements of human nature are clearly distinguished.
 - a. In Genesis 2:7, man is formed out of dust, but the breath of life comes directly from God. This is a new act, which distinguishes man.
 - b. The physical is formed, but the life is breathed in by God.
5. Man is placed in an exalted position.
 - a. Man alone is called to subdue the earth and to fill it with the glory of God.
 - b. Man is given dominion “over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1:28).
 - c. Berkhof writes, “He is crowned as a king of the lower creation and is given dominion over all the inferior creatures.”⁵
- ii. MacArthur notes, “created last, on the sixth day of creation week, man is unique and is the high point of creation.”⁶
 1. This was the final act of creation by God. Nothing was created after this climatic moment.
 2. Strachan and Peacock write, “This is His last creative stroke, and His timing signals that this is His masterwork.”⁷
- b. Man is created out of dust, woman from man.
 - i. Man is formed out of dust and given life by the breath of God (Gen. 2:7).
 - ii. Woman is formed from the rib of the man (Gen. 2:22). This conveys the intimacy that is found between man and woman.
 - iii. This also conveys that they are not the same. There is a difference between men and women.
- c. Man is given work to do.
 - i. God gave man tasks that he was to accomplish (Gen. 1:28):
 1. Be fruitful
 2. Multiply
 3. Fill the earth
 4. Subdue the earth
 5. Have dominion over the other creatures
 - ii. Man was not created to be lazy, nor is work a result of the Fall, but it was given by God for man’s good.
 - iii. Stewardship is key, and the idea of the necessity of being a good steward is carried throughout the rest of Scripture. The reason for this is everything that man has is given by God. It is not his possession, but

⁵ Ibid. 183.

⁶ John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine: a Handbook on Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 221.

⁷ Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Fearn, Ross-shire, GB: Christian Focus, 2016), 21.

rather his to steward for the glory of God. This is the established order in the Garden of Eden.

3. The Imago Dei

a. Parameters set

i. Hammett lists five biblical parameters that are helpful in defining the image of God:⁸

1. Creation in the image of God is affirmed for all persons.
2. Creation in the image of God involves being like God in some unspecified way.
3. Creation in the image of God is the basis for human uniqueness and dignity.
4. Even after the fall, humans are spoken of as being in the image of God, so the image is not completely lost in full.
5. Moreover, since Christ is the perfect image of God and the result of this process of restoration is being fully like Christ, we may speak of the image of God as being not only our created design but also our eschatological destiny.

b. What Imago Dei does not mean:

i. Turretin expresses two ways in which the Imago Dei must not be understood:⁹

1. This image does not consist in a participation of the divine essence.
 - a. Being made in the image of God does not mean that humans share in the very essence of triune God.
 - b. 2 Peter 1:4 says that Christians are partakers of the divine nature, but this is speaking analogically rather than ontologically. Christians, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit become more like Jesus, but they do not become divine.
2. It does not consist in any figure of the body or external bearing in which man resembles God.
 - a. God is spirit (Jn 4:24). Therefore, the imago Dei must be deeper than just a physical likeness.

c. Difficult definitions:

i. Keathley describes the three major views of the Imago Dei:¹⁰

1. The Substantive View
 - a. The common element in the several varieties of this view is that the image is identified as some definite

⁸ Daniel L. Akin, ed., *Theology for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2014), 294.

⁹ These are found in Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1997), 465.

¹⁰ Kenneth Keathley, *Systematic Theology I: Class Notes* (Raleigh, NC: SEBTS, 2006-2007), 104-106.

characteristic or quality within the makeup of the human.¹¹ It is something in man's substance.

- b. This would include reason, namely, the ability to think reflects the image of God, as well as walking upright as a symbol of the moral uprightness of man.¹²
- c. Erickson writes, "the image resides in humans whether or not they recognize God's existence and his work."¹³ Indeed, this is true for all humans. It is not just Christians who bear the image of God.

2. The Relational View

- a. This view is of the experience of a relationship. The image *is* the experience of having relationships with others, and most importantly with God.¹⁴
- b. He notes, "The image is not an entity that a human possesses so much as the experience that is present when a relationship is active."¹⁵
- c. Man was created to be in a relationship with His Creator. This is what separates him from the rest of the created order who are unable to experience a relationship in the same way.

3. The Functional View

- a. Erickson describes this in saying, "As God is the Lord over all of creation, humans reflect the image of God by exercising dominion over the rest of creation. The image of God is actually an image of God as Lord."¹⁶

4. Each of these views has merits to it, though none seem to grasp the Imago Dei in its entirety.

ii. Horton suggests the following four characteristics for the image of God:¹⁷

1. Sonship/royal dominion

- a. Man is given dominion and is tasked with ruling over all of creation, stewarding it well.

2. Representation

- a. Man, as having dominion, is a vice regent. He is ruling as a representative of God. As the Creator, God is the rightful Ruler and King, but He graciously gives man the task of representing Him.

¹¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 460.

¹² Ibid. 461.

¹³ Ibid. 463.

¹⁴ Ibid. 463.

¹⁵ Ibid. 465.

¹⁶ Ibid. 466.

¹⁷ This list is found in Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology: Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 128.

3. Glory
 - a. Man is to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth with image bearers. This is spreading the glory of the Lord over the face of the earth.
4. Prophetic Witness
 - a. Man is tasked with declaring the glory of God to one another.
5. Each of these are still present after the Fall.
- iii. Bavinck notes, "The whole being, therefore, and not *something in man but man himself*, is the image of God... the human being does not *bear or have* the image of God but he or she *is* the image of God."¹⁸
 1. The image of God is something that man is, and not something that he possesses or can be taken away entirely in this life. Certainly, the Fall marred the image (this will be discussed below), but the image is still present.
 2. He is right that it is the entire person that is the image of God. Though the body does not image God, for God is spirit, the body is necessary. Christ was not resurrected in spirit alone, nor is the resurrection of His followers going to be exclusively spiritual. Rather, the body will be present because the entire person is the image of God.
- iv. It seems that each of these allow for a glimpse into what it means to be made in the image of God. Man is set apart through the spiritual aspect present in him. This spiritual aspect, in allowing him to recognize and be in a relationship with God, as well as the obey what He has commanded him to do, are key to understanding the Imago Dei.
- d. Imago Dei and human dignity
 - i. Every single human being, from the moment of conception, is the image of God, which makes every single human life valuable.
 1. If man evolved, he possesses no inherent dignity and need not be treated with respect and care.
 2. The secularism of the day, the abandonment of a belief in creation of man by God, and the Imago Dei has led to the current culture of death that is prevalent in America.
 3. The demand for abortion on demand for any reason, or no reason, as well as euthanasia can be attributed to a loss of a belief in the value of every human life because he or she has been made in the image of God.
 - ii. God sees His image bearers as possessing value such that, to shed innocent blood is to forfeit one's own life (Gen. 9:6).

¹⁸ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 554.

- iii. Therefore, every human has infinitely more value than the greatest animal. A person with Down-syndrome is infinitely more valuable than an award-winning racehorse because he or she has been made in the image of God.
 - e. Jesus is the true Image of God
 - i. Jesus is called the image of God in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15.
 - ii. Because Christ is without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15), He perfectly images God in a way that sinful man is not able to.
 - iii. Christians are to live in conformity to Christ and are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18). This means, as Christians are being sanctified, they are being restored to the original image of God that was distorted in the fall (more on this later on).
- 4. Male and Female created He them
 - a. God created two genders.
 - i. Genesis 1:27 says, “male and female he created them”.
 - 1. There are no other options.
 - 2. An individual’s gender, or sex, is given by God and is unchangeable, for the genetic structures will always remain as male or female, despite any surgical procedures.
 - 3. The prevailing notion in American culture is that, because there are individuals who are born with both sexual organs, this is known as intersex, that gender must be a spectrum, with each individual identifying himself or herself somewhere on this spectrum.¹⁹ This leads to categories such as: transgender, gender-fluid, and non-binary.
 - 4. This reality is contrary to the biblical worldview, for God created a binary, which is not socially constructed, but found in creation and is itself good.
 - a. Denny Burk argues, “We dare not miss that God created sexual differentiation. The terms *male* and *female* are not cultural constructs. They are not social roles foisted upon mankind by the accretion of culture and tradition. *Male* and *female* designate the fundamental distinction that God has embedded in the very biology of the race.”²⁰
 - ii. Strachan and Peacock write, “Man as male and female does not owe to an evolutionary outworking, but to divine intent.”²¹

¹⁹ Rebecca McLaughlin, *10 Questions Every Kid Should Ask (and Answer) Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 145.

²⁰ Denny Burk, *What is the Meaning of Sex?* quoted in R. Albert Mohler, *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 79.

²¹ Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Fearn, Ross-shire, GB: Christian Focus, 2016), 23.

1. God is a creative and loving God, and He designed the two genders for a specific purpose.
- b. God created two genders in order to complement one another.
 - i. In the goodness of creation, there was one aspect that was not good: that man should be alone (Gen. 2:18).
 - ii. In all of creation, there was not a helper that was fit for man; and so, God remedied this by creating woman.
 - iii. As a helper, “the role given to woman... signifies that she will fill a vital role, and apply unique gifts, to the world God has made.”²² This is a role that she was designed by God to fill, and it is her glory to fulfill this God-given responsibility.
 - iv. The command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earthy” necessitates procreation, which only takes place because there are two genders. Therefore, there is also a practical aspect to this design.
 - c. Both males and females are created in the image of God.
 - i. There is equality in value in the two genders as both are made in the image of God.
 - ii. Woman is not less of the image of God because she was taken out of man. Rather, both are the image of God.
 - d. Marriage first takes place in the Garden of Eden.
 - i. Genesis 2:24 establishes God’s design for marriage, as well as the pattern of marriage that is carried throughout the entirety of Scripture. It says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”
 - ii. Succinctly put, the Christian view of marriage is between one biological male and one biological female for life.
 1. Any deviance from this design is unbiblical. These include ‘same-sex marriage’ as well as transgender marriage.
 2. Any argument is hurled against Christians that Jesus never spoke against homosexuality, which is true in a narrow sense. However, what Jesus does say is far more important. This account is found in Matthew 19:1-12. He is asked by Pharisees whether it is lawful to divorce one’s wife for any reason. Jesus responds by saying, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mt. 19:4-6). In addressing divorce, Jesus refers to the original, pre-Fall, design of marriage. This, He says, is God’s true design, which means anything outside of this design is forbidden. Therefore, ‘same-sex’ marriage is prohibited from the outset.

²² Ibid. 34.

- e. The distinction in roles between the two genders are a part of the original design of God, and not a result of the Fall.
 - i. Male headship in the family and male leadership in the church are connected to the creation order and are not a result of the Fall.
 - 1. Paul, in describing the function of teaching in a local church, traces his argument back to the order of creation (1 Tim. 2:12-15).
 - 2. Therefore, the role of pastor/elder is reserved for males (1 Tim. 2:12-15; 3:2).
 - a. This is not to imply that women are not to serve in the local church. Scripture is clear they are to do so (Tit. 2:3-5). However, it is clear that God has designed separate roles which are reserved for men or women only.
 - ii. This reality of headship can be seen in who bears the responsibility when sin occurs (Gen. 3:8-13). It is the man that is addressed first because he was given the responsibility to protect and love his wife, which he failed to do in allowing the serpent to tempt her.
 - 1. Paul continues with this line of thinking when he writes that wives are to submit to their husbands because husbands are the heads of their wives (Eph. 5:22-23). The root of this is the relationship that is present with Christ and His church. Marriage and headship are representative of a greater reality that is experienced and will be experienced in the future in the marriage supper of the Lamb between Christ and His church.
 - 2. It must be noted that a difference in role does not entail a difference in value. On a team, for instance, players have different roles, and this is a good thing. If every soccer player was a goalie, then the team would never score. Men and women have different roles as designed by God, and this is good.
- f. How should Christians respond to a world that is demanding a departure from nature and the Creator?
 - i. There must be a commitment to live not by lies.
 - 1. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was a Russian who was exiled during the Soviet Era. He penned an essay that was released in 1974, on the day before he was exiled. In it he lays out the means of resistance for the people who refuse to submit to the prevailing false ideology. This essay is helpful for Christians today facing another hostile ideology.
 - 2. He writes, “And this is the way to break out of the imaginary encirclement of our inertness, the easiest way for us and the most devastating for the lies. For when people renounce lies, lies simply cease to exist. Like parasites, they can only survive when attached to a person. We are not called upon to step out onto the square and shout out the truth, to say out loud what we think—this is

scary, we are not ready. But let us at least refuse to say what we *do not* think!... Our way must be: Never knowingly support lies!”²³

3. A Christian, as a person of truth who is committed to serving the God who is true (Jn. 3:33; 14:6, 17), one must be committed to the truth, even if it is unpopular.
 4. Solzhenitsyn helpfully articulates that the man must not declare his beliefs out loud in the center square, as that could lead to his arrest (especially in Soviet Russia), but he must, at the very least, be committed to not support something he knows to be false.
 5. In the case of the cultural confusion on gender, the Christian must be committed to God’s design, and never comply with the popular lies.
- ii. Christians must understand that ontology will trump autonomy.
 1. Mohler describes this reality, “That means that biological physical facts, facts of being will trump assertions of personal autonomy. I may say that I was born in 1492 but I wasn't. It's impossible. I may say that right now I am in Beijing, but I'm not. It is impossible. It does not correspond to the facts. I could claim to be this or that and claim my autonomy is the right to declare myself this or that. I could require you to call me this or that or even play into my self conception as this or that, but it doesn't make me this or that.”²⁴
 2. Just because someone claims something, does not make it true. Ontology, or an object’s being, will trump, in the end, a person’s self-identity. This means, for example, a male might identify as a female, but if a future archeologist excavates the body, he will find a male body with a male genetic code. Nature will win in the end.
 - iii. Christians must have confidence that God will bless and honor His Word, and He will be victorious in the end (Is. 55:11).
 - iv. Christians must be committed to speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).
 1. Both aspects must be present in order for the Christian to remain faithful to Christ.
 2. If truth is lacking, then any benefit will be superficial, and the individual will still be in eternal danger.
 3. If love is lacking, then the truth will potentially cause more harm, just as the sun will harden clay.
 4. When Christians encounter a hostile culture, speaking the truth in love and compassion must be non-negotiable.

5. Adam and Eve: historical individuals

²³ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, “Solzhenitsyn Live Not by Lies,” Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn Center, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.solzhenitsyncenter.org/live-not-by-lies>.

²⁴ R Albert Mohler, “Monday, Feb. 18, 2019,” The Briefing (Albert Mohler, February 18, 2019), <https://albertmohler.com/2019/02/18/briefing-2-18-19>.

- a. The Genesis account describes Adam and Eve as real-life, historical individuals, created by God.
 - i. Adam was brought the creatures to give them their name (Gen. 2:19).
 - ii. Adam fathered Cain, Abel, and Seth, which is not possible if he were not a historical person.
 - 1. This fact rules out the possibility for man to be evolved over a long period of time.
- b. The New Testament speaks of Adam and Eve as historical individuals.
 - i. The genealogy of Jesus traces back to Adam (Lk. 3:38).
 - ii. Paul believes Adam to be a historical individual, as he bases his argument on this reality.
 - 1. Romans 5:12-21, Christ is seen as the second and greater Adam.
 - 2. Through Adam came death through sin, but life comes through Jesus Christ.
 - 3. If Adam is not real, then the comparison with Christ makes no sense.
 - 4. This argument can also be seen in 1 Corinthians 15:21.
 - iii. Paul also uses the historicity of Adam and Eve to display the complementary roles that each have (1 Tim. 2:13).
- c. This is not a small, insignificant matter.
 - i. MacArthur notes, "A literal Adam is foundational for understanding the origin and history of the human race, the nature of humanity, the origin of sin, the beginning of human and animal death, the need for salvation, the basis for historical events in Genesis the reason for functional order within the church, and even the future existence of mankind."²⁵
 - ii. To disregard the reality of Adam and Eve in the name of 'science' is to forfeit far more than this single account.

The Doctrine of Sin

1. Definition:

- a. Frame begins by defining a good or righteous deed as a contrast to sin.
 - i. He writes, "A good or righteous deed is one that (1) obeys the proper standard, God's law (James 4:11; 1 John 3:4), (2) seeks the proper goal, God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31) and the success of his kingdom (Matt. 6:33), and (3) is motivated by true faith (Rom. 14:23) and love (1 Cor. 13:1-3)."²⁶
- b. Therefore, he defines sin as: disobedience to God's law, self-glorification, and unbelief, hatred of God.²⁷

²⁵ John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine: a Handbook on Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 224.

²⁶ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: an Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 848-849.

²⁷ Ibid. 849.

- i. This means that sin is not just disobedience to the commands of God but disrupts the goal and end of humanity. There is something deeper involved, and it is disorienting and destructive.
 - ii. He writes, “the situational [seeking God’s glory] and existential [unbelief and hatred] remind us that ethical behavior is not just a response to commands, but commitment to a historical program (the kingdom of God, magnifying his glory) and a personal relationship (our faith in and love for Christ).”²⁸
 - 1. Man is not just rebelling against commands, but against a Person.
 - iii. He reminds the Christian this “understanding of sin helps us to understand that sin is a condition of the human heart and therefore affects all areas of our lives.”²⁹
 - iv. This means salvation must come from outside and cannot take place through man’s attempt at moral reform, for man cannot reform such a deep-seeded problem.
- c. Keathley defines sin using the three terms present in Scripture for this reality (Ex. 34:6-7):³⁰
- i. Sin: To miss the mark on purpose. This is the general term used in the Bible most often.
 - ii. Iniquity: Twisted and disfigured. Deviates from the norm. Not in the right relationship. Not all sin is iniquity, but all iniquity is sin. It is possible to do something that is good outside of the will of God (sex). To engage in something that was never intended (homosexuality), we are now twisting and marring (iniquity). A disfigurement of God’s plan and order.
 - iii. Transgression: Knowing where the line is and deliberately crossing it. It is used pertaining to the covenant. To cross a forbidden line, to rebel. This may be the strongest word, for it indicates the breaking of a pact or betray. A treacherous act.
- d. Sin must be understood, in part, as being a privation, or the lack of something.
- i. Bavinck writes, “Sin, accordingly, has to be understood and described neither as an existing thing nor as being in things that exist but rather as a defect, a deprivation, an absence of good, or as weakness, imbalance, just as blindness is a deprivation of sight.”³¹
 - ii. This is important because God is the Creator of all things that exist and, if sin had a physical existence, would be the Author of sin. This is cannot be (Jam. 1:13)
 - iii. He notes, “Sin is a privation of the moral perfection a human ought to possess.”³²

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. 850.

³⁰ Kenneth Keathley, *Systematic Theology I: Class Notes* (Raleigh, NC: SEBTS, 2006-2007).

³¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 136.

³² Ibid. 137.

1. This is key because it implies the original goodness in which man was created by God.
- e. Sin is heinous.
- i. Sin is an infinite offense against as infinitely holy God.
 1. The severity of sin corresponds to the character and authority of the one sinned against. Thusly, murder is bad, but the killing of a government leader is treacherous.
 2. Because God is holy to an infinite degree, signified in the thrice repetition in Isaiah 6 bringing it to the superlative degree, a sin against Him is infinitely abhorrent. To sin against Someone so pure and undefiled deserves the highest severity of punishment.
 3. This is why sin must be killed in the lives of believers. It must not be tolerated.
 - ii. All sins are ultimately against God.
 1. David, in Psalm 51:4, states that his sin in his affair with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah (2 Sam. 11) is against God only.
 2. David understands that the severity of a sin against God far outweighs the cruelty to any other person. Yes, David sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah; ultimately, though, his sin was against his God.
 - iii. An eternity in the lake of fire is the righteous punishment for any and all sin.
 1. The Judge of all the earth will do what is right (Gen. 18:25), and this means an eternity in hell for sin is the correct and just response (Rev. 20:14-15).
 2. Christians must not be embarrassed of this doctrine, but rather use it as fuel to share the gospel with others.
 - iv. There are no small, insignificant sins, for all are an offense to a holy God.
 1. No sin can be excused as insignificant when one understands Who it is that is being sinned against.
 2. Therefore, this must be first understood if Christians are to live lives of holiness.
 3. Love for Christ should drive believers away from anything that would displease or dishonor Him.
- f. Sin is progressive.
- i. Speaking of Jonathan Edwards: "Our evil disposition, if unchecked by grace, will increase in strength just as a "falling body" picks up speed as it plummets toward the earth."³³
 1. Romans 1 displays the progression of sin as man refuses to give God the honor and thanks He deserves and continues into idolatry and dishonorable passions such as homosexuality (Rom. 1:18-32).

³³ Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 348.

2. If sin is left to run wild, it will progress from bad to worse, lust to adultery, anger to murder, covetousness to stealing.

2. The Origin of Sin

- a. Where did sin first take place? Sin in the angelic realm.
 - i. God created angels as good, just as the rest of the creation was good (Gen. 1:31).
 - ii. Berkhof notes, "The exact time of this fall is not designated, but in John 8:44 Jesus speaks of the devil as a murderer from the beginning (*kat' arches*), and John says in 1 John 3:8, that he sins from the beginning. The prevailing opinion is that this *kat' arches* means from the beginning of the history of man."³⁴
 1. Since man's creation, Satan and the demons have been in rebellion against their Creator.
 - iii. Though the Bible does not narrate the fall of Satan and demons, it is clear that they fell into sin before man was created.
 1. Isaiah 14:3-21 and Ezekiel 28:2-19 deal with the defeat of the kings of Babylon and Tyre, respectively, using imagery suggesting analogies with the fall of Satan.³⁵
 2. Frame notes, "since the tempter of Genesis 3 was a fallen angel, the angelic fall evidently preceded the fall of man."³⁶
 - iv. What was the sin?
 1. Berkhof writes, "Very little is said about the sin that caused the fall of the angels. From Paul's warning to Timothy, that no novice should be appointed as bishop, "lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil," 1 Tim. 3:6, we may in all probability conclude that it was the sin of pride, of aspiring to be like God in power and authority."³⁷
 - a. This would explain why the serpent would tempt Eve to take and eat of the fruit that they might be like God (Gen. 3:4-5).³⁸
- b. The serpent enters the Garden and tempts Eve.
 - i. Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden with the task of working it and keeping it (Gen. 2:15).
 - ii. The first indication that trouble is approaching is that the serpent was not immediately cast out by the man upon his initial conversation with Eve.
- c. The Fall took place when the Word of God was questioned.

³⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: with a Complete Textual Index* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), 221.

³⁵ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: an Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 775.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: with a Complete Textual Index* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), 221.

³⁸ Ibid.

- i. The serpent begins his temptation with the words, “Did God actually say,” (Gen. 3:1).
 1. Berkhof states, “[the serpent] sows the seeds of doubt by calling the good intention of God in question and suggesting that His command was really an infringement of man’s liberty and rights.”³⁹
- ii. The woman’s response adds to the original command of God (Gen. 3:3).
 1. God commanded them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17).
 2. It may seem wise to add the extra level of protection in not touching it, for in order to eat of the tree one must first touch it. However, it is always wrong and to add or take away from the Word of God (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18).
 - a. This is the same line of thinking that led the Pharisees to add traditions to the law of God. They set unnecessary and burdensome rules, rules that Jesus often spoke against, in order to ensure the law is kept. However, God’s Word is always sufficient. This is the lesson that must be learned.
- iii. Upon sowing seeds of doubt in their minds, the serpent then outright contradicts God, telling them that, if they disobey, they will become like God.
 1. Adam and Eve began to wonder if God was restricting them in not allowing them to eat of this single tree. Is God robbing them of an experience that is rightfully theirs? In a world full of yes’s, they focus on the only no.
- iv. For Adam and Eve, the standard of truth is no longer the Creator God, but rather their own personal outlook.
 1. Genesis 3:6, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”
 2. It was the woman’s sight that determined what was good or evil, right or wrong. It was no longer the Word of God.
 3. Goldsworthy writes, “The most important effect of this is that God is no longer regarded as the self-evident Creator and Lord. His Word is no longer accepted as self-evident truth, but is reduced to the status of the word of the creature.”⁴⁰
- v. Man rebels against the Creator.

³⁹ Ibid. 223.

⁴⁰ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: the Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 104.

1. Calvin notes, "For Adam would never have dared oppose God's authority unless he had disbelieved in God's Word."⁴¹
 2. In seeking to become like God, Adam and Eve become unlike God, for now they are sinners. They were each made in the image and likeness of God. They were already like God. However, in seeking to establish their own right, they became unlike Him.
 3. Goldsworthy helpfully writes, "Again the cunning of the snake: he does not suggest that the humans transfer their allegiance from God to himself, but only that they themselves should consider and evaluate God's claim to truth. The final effect was the same as if they had installed Satan as Lord, but it is achieved without the humans realizing it. They rebel against God not by consciously making Satan their new final authority, but by taking that function to themselves."⁴²
- vi. This should be a warning to Christians of the dire consequences of the Word of God being doubted, distorted, ignored, or abandoned.
- d. The curse that resulted, and a promise given.
- i. That Adam and Eve did not die immediately upon rebelling against God is a sign of His grace to them. They forfeited their right to life as they sinned for the first time.
 - ii. God calls out to His image-bearers, but they hide from Him (Gen. 3:8-9).
 - iii. The blaming of others shows the extent to which sin has taken hold. Responsibility it abdicated.
 1. The man blames the woman, and ultimately God as the One who gave her to him (Gen. 3:12).
 2. The woman blames the serpent for having deceived her (Gen. 3:13).
 - iv. The curses of God (Gen.3:14-19):
 1. The serpent is cursed to crawl on his belly and eat dust.
 2. Enmity was placed between the serpent and the woman, between his offspring and hers.
 3. The woman is given a painful childbearing process. It will now be difficult and painful to be fruitful and multiply.
 4. The woman will also desire to control her husband in a way that was never intended. There will be tension between husband and wife in the household.
 5. The ground is cursed and will not yield its food easily for man. His work, which was once pleasant in the Garden, is now laborious and difficult.

⁴¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 246.

⁴² Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: the Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 104.

- v. The promise given (Gen. 3:15):
 - 1. In the midst of the curse, God promises redemption as the seed of the woman will crush the head of the seed of the serpent, though the seed of the woman will be bruised in the process. This is fulfilled in Christ.
- e. Consequences of the Fall
 - i. MacArthur lists several consequences that ensue as a direct result of the Fall:⁴³
 - 1. Personal Consequences:
 - a. Man became aware of their nakedness and must be clothed. The nakedness led to shame that was not present before.
 - b. Fear enters into the minds of Adam and Eve for the first time, as they hide in fear as God walks through the Garden in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:10).
 - c. As noted above, blame is a result of sin.
 - 2. Relationship with God is severed.
 - a. The wrath of God now is upon man, whereas before it was only blessing (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6).
 - b. There is now hostility between God and man, whereas before there was intimacy and love (Rom. 5:10; 8:7; Eph. 4:18).
 - 3. Relationship with people is disrupted.
 - a. Procreation is now a painful experience (Gen. 3:16).
 - b. There will be struggle and strife within marriage.
 - c. "Third, strife between persons in general society is promised and realized... The history of mankind manifests continual hatred, strife, murders, and war."⁴⁴
 - 4. Relationship with creation is affected.
 - a. The ground will now produce thorns and thistles, whereas before it produced bountifully.
 - b. Creation is groaning in anticipation of its coming redemption, just like mankind (Rom. 8:22).
 - ii. MacArthur notes three forms of death that enter as a consequence of the Fall:⁴⁵
 - 1. Spiritual death
 - a. Spiritual death is the state of alienation from God that now characterizes all men.
 - 2. Physical death

⁴³ These are found in John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine: a Handbook on Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 248-250.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 250.

⁴⁵ These are found in Ibid. 250-251.

- a. Though Adam and Eve, as well as many of their descendants, enjoyed a long life, physical death began at the moment of sin. The first example of death of mankind shows a clear correlation with sin, as Cain murders his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8).
 - b. Every man will die physically.
 - 3. Eternal death
 - a. "Eternal death awaits those who physically die while being spiritually dead."⁴⁶
 - b. This is eternity in hell of the lake of fire, what John calls the "second death" (Rev. 20:6).
 - c. The only escape is through faith in Christ, Who bore death, spiritually, physically, and eternally, on the cross.
- f. The Imago Dei marred, not destroyed.
 - i. Though sin has entered into the world, death through sin, and man is no longer 'like God' for they are rebels, the Imago Dei is retained.
 - 1. After the flood, God makes a covenant with Noah in which He states clearly that a reckoning will be required for those who take the life of man. He says, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, but man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image" (Gen. 9:6).
 - 2. This statement comes directly after God has promised to never again curse the ground because of man, "for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21 cf., Gen. 6:5). Though man's heart is against God in sin, he is still made in the image of God.
 - ii. All aspects of humanity have been affected by sin.
 - 1. There is no faculty of the human life that has not been affected by the reality of sin:
 - a. Physical diseases exist because sin entered the world.
 - b. Man has futility in his mind, having his understanding darkened as a result of alienation from God in sin (Eph. 4:17-18). Paul says that to set the mind on the flesh is death, which is where the mind will remain apart from the intervention of God (Rom. 8:6). This mind is hostile to God (Rom. 8:7).
 - c. The affections of man, his loves and desires are affected, as he now loves the darkness rather than the light (Jn. 3:19).
 - d. Calvin writes, "we are so vitiated and perverted in every part of our nature that by this great corruption we stand justly condemned and convicted before God, to whom

⁴⁶ Ibid. 251.

nothing is acceptable but righteousness, innocence, and purity.”⁴⁷

- i. Views of the transmission of the sin are discussed below. However, what is uncontested is that man stands condemned before God for sin (Rom. 3:9-20).
 2. Man is not as bad as he could be, only because of the common grace of God, but man is sinful in all areas of his life.
 - a. Bavinck helpfully writes, “The teaching of Scripture, after all, is not that every human lives at all times in all possible actual sins and is in fact guilty of violating all God’s commandments. It only refers to the deepest inclination, the innermost disposition, the fundamental directedness of human nature and confesses that it is not turned toward God but away from him.”⁴⁸
 3. Paul is clear that man is naturally dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1)
 - a. Death is a unit that encompasses the entire person.
 - b. It is unthinkable to consider man dead in one category and not in another.
 - c. He lives as spiritually dead until he is physical dead and will then enter into eternal death, if not for the grace of God in the work of Christ giving him life through faith.
 4. This is why there being born-again is crucial, and a believer is spoken of as a new creation.
 - a. Jesus emphasizes that salvation will not come apart from being born again (Jn. 3:3, 5).
 - b. Paul says that those who are in Christ are a new creation; the old has passed away and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).
 - i. This reality is the basis for mortification in which the new man is to put to death the old sinful habits that remain. This will be discussed in greater detail below.
- iii. In salvation, man is being restored to the image of God that is perfect in Christ.
 1. Christians are called to imitate others only as they imitate Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

⁴⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 251.

⁴⁸ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 120.

- a. Christians are to be diligent in imitating Christ in lives of holiness because He is the true image of God.
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “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.”
 - a. In beholding Christ in faith, through the Spirit, the believer is being transformed into the image of God that was marred in the Fall.
 - 3. It must be understood that this is a process and will take the entirety on one’s life to accomplish. It is by degrees.
 - g. The fourfold state of humanity.
 - i. Augustine argues that the liberty of man can be summarized in fourfold state:⁴⁹
 - 1. Posse peccare and posse non peccare: able to sin and able not to sin.
 - a. This is the pre-Fall condition of man.
 - 2. Non posse non peccare: not able to not sin.
 - a. After the Fall, man is dead in sin and trespasses (Eph. 2:1), loves the darkness (Jn. 3:19), and enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:6, 17).
 - b. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).
 - c. All the good deeds of those outside of Christ are accounted as a polluted garment (Is. 64:6).
 - 3. Posse non peccare: able not to sin
 - a. Christians have been set free from bondage to sin and are called to live a life of holiness (Rom. 6:18; 8:13).
 - b. They are now able to not sin.
 - 4. Non posse peccare: not able to sin
 - a. In glorification, man will be perfect in Christ and will no longer have the ability to sin (Phil. 3:21).
3. The spread of sin
 - a. Sin is universal.
 - i. Bavinck writes, “The first sin, the sin for which our original human ancestors are responsible, has had calamitous consequences for them as well as all their descendants and unleashed a flood of misery on the human race. In consequence, humanity as a whole, and every person in particular, is burdened with guilt, defiled, and subject to ruin and death.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ This outline is found in R C Sproul, “Ligonier Ministries,” *Ligonier Ministries* (blog), accessed April 27, 2021, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/loss-and-restoration-liberty/>.

⁵⁰ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 78.

- ii. This sentiment is exactly right because every individual is guilty of sin.
 - iii. Paul declares that “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one” (Rom. 3:10-12).
 - iv. After God has judged the world through the flood He says, “the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth” (Gen. 8:21).
 - v. The universality of sin cannot be questioned.
- b. Original sin
- i. MacArthur helpfully speaks on original sin, writing, “While “original sin” refers to the first sin committed by Adam, it also encompasses the sinful state and condition of all people because of their relationship to Adam. It explains why people are depraved and tainted with sin from conception.”⁵¹
 - 1. David says he was “brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5).
 - 2. Paul, in Ephesians 2:3 declares that all people, apart from the saving work of Christ, are by nature children of wrath.
 - ii. Romans 5:12-21: Views of the imputation of sin from Adam.
 - 1. Bad Example:
 - a. “Some hold that Adam’s sin is a bad example left for all people. When people sin, they choose to follow Adam’s bad precedent.”⁵²
 - b. Therefore, there is no sin nature given to man through Adam.
 - 2. Inherited Sinful Nature:
 - a. “All men are born with a physical and moral constitution that predisposes them to sin. All do sin when they arrive at moral consciousness. The original predisposition may be called sin since it inevitably eventuates in sin, but only voluntary acts are actually sin. So, God imputes to men only their own acts of rebellion.”⁵³
 - b. This view finds its basis in Romans 5:12, which says, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned”.
 - i. It is the individual sinning that makes him or her morally responsible as a sinner. However, the disposition to sin, which makes the sin inevitable is a result of original sin.

⁵¹ John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine: a Handbook on Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 248-251.

⁵² Ibid. 252.

⁵³ Kenneth Keathley, *Systematic Theology I: Class Notes* (Raleigh, NC: SEBTS, 2006-2007).

- c. The emphasis is on that death spread to all men because all sinned. The sinful nature is inherited, and the guilt is rendered when an individual sins.
- d. Erickson writes, “We all were involved in Adam’s sin, and thus receive both the corrupted nature that was his after the fall, and the guilt and condemnation that attach to his sin. With this matter of guilt, however, just as with the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, there must be some conscious and voluntary decision on our part. Until this is the case, there is only a conditional imputation of guilt.”⁵⁴

3. Realism

- a. Augustine argues that all were physically present in Adam when he sinned and, therefore all are guilty of the original sin. Every individual was there in his loins, in seed form, for all will come from Adam. This means all participated in the act of sinning and are morally guilty and condemned.⁵⁵
- b. The biblical basis for this is found in Hebrews 7:9-10, which says, “One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.”
 - i. Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek because he was in the loins of Abraham, who would be his great-grandfather.
- c. Because of the action of Abraham was also seen as the action of Levi, the sin of Adam is seen as the sin of all men because all were in him.
- d. One main issue with this view is the parallel Romans 5:12-21 makes between Adam and Christ. Those who are in Christ by faith are not there by physical, biological union, for Jesus had no physical children.

4. Representative Headship

- a. This view asserts “that the action of a representative is determinative for all members united to him. When Adam sinned, he represented all people; therefore, his sin is reckoned to his descendants.”⁵⁶
 - i. An example of headship affecting others is found in Joshua 7, in which Achan sins against God in taking spoil from Jericho that was to be committed totally to destruction. However, it is not just Achan that

⁵⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 582.

⁵⁵ John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine: a Handbook on Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 248-253.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 255.

- dies for the sin. His entire family, sons, daughters, oxen, donkeys, and sheep were all killed for the transgression.
 - ii. As the head, when Achan sinned, his entire family is deemed guilty.
 - b. When God made Adam, He made him as the representative of all who would come after him. Therefore, when Adam sinned, all humanity became guilty and inherited a sin nature.
 - i. This is the major difference between the inherited sin nature view and the headship view: the guilt is transferred in the headship view. Both teach that a sin nature is inherited, but representative headship believe that the guilty verdict is placed on all humanity as well.
 - c. The biblical basis of this is found in Romans 5:18-19, which says, “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”
 - i. The sin of Adam led to condemnation for all those he represents, and the work of Christ leads to justification for all He represents.
 - ii. Adam is viewed as the representative for man. Christ is the Second Adam who represents His followers.

The Mortification of Sin

1. Definition:
 - a. Mortification, in the old usage, is to put something to death.
 - b. In this case, it is in regard to the putting to death sin in the life of a follower of Christ.
2. Strong language
 - a. Scripture uses graphic, strong language when it speaks on the reality of sin in the life of the believer:
 - i. Colossians 3:3: For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
 - ii. Colossians 3:5: Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

- iii. Galatians 2:19-20: For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ.
 - iv. Galatians 5:24: And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
 - v. 1 Peter 2:24: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.
 - vi. Romans 6:2: By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?
 - vii. Romans 6:5-6: For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.
 - viii. Romans 7:4: Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.
 - ix. Romans 8:13: For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
 - x. 1 Corinthians 9:27: But I discipline my body and keep it under control
 - b. Strong language is used because sin is a horrifying reality and should be dealt with swiftly and strongly.
 - c. Strong language is to demonstrate the seriousness with which Christians are to deal with the remaining sin in their lives.
3. The foundation of mortification
- a. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ
 - i. Because Christ was crucified and raised as an atonement for sins, Paul argues that Christians are not to continue in the sin for which Christ died (Rom. 6:1-2).
 - ii. Christ has freed believers from the dominion of sin, and to then return to the former slave master demonstrates either an insufficient understanding of salvation or that he is still under sin (Rom. 6:14-19).
 - iii. Piper preaches, *“He was killed for your sin. You were killed in him and died to sin. Therefore, kill in yourself every quivering of that corpse of sin, lest you find him to be no corpse, but a captor, and yourself dead.”*⁵⁷
 - iv. The killing of sin is not the believer’s ground of salvation. Salvation comes in being united to Christ by faith in His finished work (Eph. 2:8-9). Attempting to earn God’s favor through effort will not succeed.
 - 1. In the same way that apples on an apple tree does not make the tree alive, so the presence of holiness does not save an individual. The root system of the tree is what makes the tree alive, in the same way that faith unites a believer to Christ. However, if the tree failed to produce apples over a long period of time, then it

⁵⁷ John Piper, “2015 Conference for Pastors,” *2015 Conference for Pastors* (February 3, 2015).

would be right to conclude the tree is dead. If a 'believer' continually fails in accomplishing good works, living in holiness, and putting sin to death, then it would be right to declare the individual as still an unbeliever.

2. Jesus makes the same illustration in Matthew 7:17-20 and 12:33.
- b. Salvation in Christ is the prerequisite for mortification.
- i. An unbeliever will not be able to mortify sin in any legitimate sense.
 - ii. Before God calls an individual to put to death sin, He first calls him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. This is seen in the preaching at Pentecost, in which the hearers called out, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). The apostles did not respond in telling them of their need to put to death sin, but rather to repent and believe the gospel. This must take place before true mortification can take place.
 - iii. Owen lucidly writes, "I say, then, mortification is not the *present* business of *unregenerate* men. God calls them not to it as yet; *conversion* is their work, -- the conversion of the *whole* soul, -- not the mortification of *this* or *that particular* lust."⁵⁸
 - iv. Piper concludes, "the only sin that can be successfully killed in the Christian life is forgiven sin. Or, to put it another way, the only practical, lived-out holiness that pleases God in his children is the holiness we pursue because we are already holy."⁵⁹
- c. The Holy Spirit is given to believers in order to fight against sin.
- i. It is the Spirit who gives the power and grace to fight against an enemy that longs to destroy man.
 - ii. Owen writes, "This whole work, which I have described as our duty, is effected, carried on, and accomplished by the power of the Spirit, in all the parts and degrees of it".⁶⁰
 - iii. He then lists six ways in which the Holy Spirit alone can be the head of the work of mortification:⁶¹
 1. He alone clearly and fully convinces the heart of the evil and guilt and danger of the corruption, lust, or sin to be mortified.
 2. The Spirit alone reveals unto us the fullness of Christ for our relief.
 3. The Spirit alone establishes the heart in expectation of relief from Christ.
 4. The Spirit alone brings the cross of Christ into our hearts with its sin-killing power.
 5. The Spirit is the Author and Finisher of our sanctification.

⁵⁸ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen: Sin and Temptation*, ed. W. H. Goold, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 35.

⁵⁹ John Piper, *Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 583.

⁶⁰ in John Owen, *The Works of John Owen: Sin and Temptation*, ed. W. H. Goold, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 85.

⁶¹ This list is found in *Ibid.* 85-86

6. In all the soul's addresses to God in this condition, it has the support from the Spirit.
 - a. Power and life in prayer for the believer are found only in the Holy Spirit
4. The necessity of mortification
 - a. Owen lists six reasons for why the Christian must make it his work to put sin to death:⁶²
 - i. Indwelling sin always *abides* while we are in this world; therefore it is always to be mortified.
 1. Paul speaks of not having "already obtained this" or as "already perfect" (Phil. 3:12).
 2. It is safe to assume if Paul was still dealing with sin in his life, modern Christians will always as well.
 - ii. Sin does not only still abide in us, but is still *acting*, still laboring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh.
 1. He writes, "When sin lets us alone we may let sin alone; but as sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet, and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still, so ought our contrivances against it to be vigorous at all times and in all conditions, even where there is least suspicion."⁶³
 2. Romans 7:23 speaks of a war being fought in the believer, for sin is never sleeping.
 3. This is a reminder that when sin in the Christian life is most quiet, with little struggle being needed, it is active still. Therefore, the Christian must be vigilant.
 - iii. Sin will not only be striving, acting, rebelling, troubling, disquieting, but if let alone, if not continually mortified, it will *bring forth great, cursed, scandalous, soul-destroying sins*.
 1. Every sin desires the fullest expression of the sin such that, every lustful glance, if not restricted, would lead to adultery.
 2. Owen writes, "There is not the best saint in the world but, if he should give over this duty, would fall into as many cursed sins as ever any did of his kind."⁶⁴
 3. Paul warns of this potential, writing, "let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).
 - iv. This is one main reason why the Spirit and the new nature is given to us—that we may have a principle within whereby to oppose sin and lust.
 1. Christians are to put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit (Rom. 8:13).

⁶² This list is found in Ibid. 10-14.

⁶³ Ibid. 11.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 12.

2. It is the mind set on the Spirit that is life and peace, while the mind set on the flesh is death (Rom. 8:6).
 3. Owen notes, "It is our participation of the divine nature that gives us an escape from the pollutions that are in the world through lust".⁶⁵
- v. Negligence in this duty casts the soul into a perfect contrary condition to that which the apostle affirms was his (2 Cor. 4:16).
 1. Paul says his old self is wasting away, but his inner self is being renewed day by day. Christians are to follow in his example and seek to renew their new nature through the killing of remaining sin that characterizes the old self.
 - vi. It is our duty to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," (2 Cor. 6:1); to be "growing in grace" every day (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18); to be "renewing our inward man day by day," (2 Cor.4:16).
 1. Christians are in the process of becoming more like Christ, and this process includes putting to death sin.
 2. Christ was without sin, and His followers are to strive, though imperfectly, to put to death the remaining sin in his or her life (Heb. 4:15).
- b. Scripture commands it
 - i. Scripture would not command believers to do something that is not an issue in their lives. God is not superfluous.
 1. Colossians 3:5: Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
 - c. Holiness is required for believers
 - i. This does not contradict the doctrine of justification by faith alone.
 1. Piper writes, "The key to killing sin and pursuing holiness, in a way that does not contradict justification by faith, is to realize that the only sin that can be successfully killed is forgiven sin."⁶⁶
 - ii. God uses means to accomplish ends, but also guarantees the ends will take place. This means, when He speaks on the necessity of holiness in the lives of believers, He ensures this is fulfilled. None who are justified in Christ by faith will be lost (Rom. 8:30). However, every individual who is justified will be sanctified by the Spirit.
 - iii. Several passages speak to the means and end of the Christian life:
 1. Romans 8:13: For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
 2. Hebrews 12:14: Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 13.

⁶⁶ John Piper, *Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 584.

- iv. In these passages, they are written as conditional, namely that if one lives according to the flesh one will die eternally, and if one is not holy then he will not see the Lord. However, it must be noted, as stated above, that God will ensure that every believer is holy, so that not one of His sheep will be lost (Jn. 6:39).
 - v. This also means a lack of desire for holiness, and lack of effort to be holy, is a warning sign of either immaturity or an unregenerate heart.
 - d. Sin is still at work in the Christian's life
 - i. Paul, by writing the warning of Romans 6:1-2 for Christians to no longer live in the sin that Christ has died to redeem, reminds his readers that the threat of sin is an ever-present reality.
 - ii. Paul then pens Romans 7 in which he describes the war present within his own heart and life between his old fleshly desires for sin, and the new desires for good (vs 15-25).
- 5. An often-ignored task
 - a. Many modern Christians do not have the category of putting sin to death. Many believe that, since salvation is by grace through faith, any effort given after is simply icing on the cake. However, the Bible speaks differently.
 - b. Scripture does not understand an individual who is justified by the work of Christ that is not also then sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. This is a foreign creature in the Bible and cannot be accepted as the norm for believers.
- 6. How to begin to put to death sin
 - a. Generally speaking, Owen says mortification consists of three things:⁶⁷
 - i. A habitual weakening of it.
 - 1. Every time a lust is carried into sin it gains new life. Therefore, one must consistently weaken the temptation if the sin is to be killed. This means that the root itself must be killed, and not just the outward appearance of sin.
 - 2. Owen writes, "This is the folly of some men; they set themselves with all earnestness and diligence against the appearing eruption of lust, but, leaving the principle and root untouched, perhaps unsearched out, they make but little or no progress in this work of mortification."⁶⁸
 - 3. Therefore, if a sin is to be killed, it must be weakened habitually.
 - ii. Constant fighting and contending against sin.
 - 1. There will be no peace between man and sin, and so a Christian must not act as if there is.
 - 2. Owen earlier asks the question and makes the statement, "Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you

⁶⁷ These are found in John Owen, *The Works of John Owen: Sin and Temptation*, ed. W. H. Goold, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 28-32.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 30.

live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.”⁶⁹

3. Sin is constantly fighting against Christians, even when it is not outwardly noticeable. Therefore, Christians must constantly and consistently war against it.
 4. This is a serious work, but it is the work the Christian is called to and is his joy in pursuing and obeying Christ.
- iii. Frequent success.
1. Owen says this a sign of genuine mortification.
 2. However, he is clear that it is not simply “a disappointment of sin, that it be not brought forth nor accomplished, but a victory over it, and pursuit of it to a complete conquest.”⁷⁰
 3. This may not always take place, as some sins must be fought against for the entirety on a believer’s life. However, it should be the goal.
- b. We must be aware of Satan’s tactics, and seek to have an answer prepared for each one.
- i. Paul commands Christians to put on the whole armor of God “that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph. 6:11).
 - ii. If Christians are aware and looking for the ways in which Satan often tempts, then it will be easier to spot and foil.
 - iii. However, to simply spot them will never be enough. One must be prepared to do battle with each temptation, ready to fight to the death in order to conquer.
- c. Thomas Brooks *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices* lists over thirty examples of ways in which Satan often tempts individuals, as well as providing remedies for these schemes. Examples include:
- i. Device: By painting sin with virtue’s colors.⁷¹
 1. Remedy: Consider that sin is never a whit the less filthy, vile, and abominable, but it’s being colored and painted with virtue’s colors.
 2. Remedy: To look on sin with the eye [with] which within a few hours we shall see it. Namely, to look at sin from the perspective of the deathbed and before the judgment seat of God.
 - ii. Device: By working them to be frequent in comparing themselves and their ways with those that are reputed or reported to be worse than themselves.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid. 9.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 32.

⁷¹ Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices* (Edinburgh, GB: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 34-35.

⁷² Ibid. 89-91.

1. Remedy: Consider that there is not a greater nor a clearer argument to prove a man a hypocrite, than to be quick sighted abroad and blind at home.
 2. Remedy: To spend more time in comparing of your internal and external actions with the Rule, with the Word, by which you must be judged at last, than in comparing of yourselves with those that are worse than yourselves.
 3. Remedy: Consider that though thy sins be not as great as those of others, yet without sound repentance on thy side and pardoning mercy on God's, thou wilt be as certainly damned as others, thou not equally tormented with others.
- iii. Device: By presenting to the soul the difficulty in performing religious duties.⁷³
1. Remedy: To dwell more upon the necessity of the service and duty, than on the difficulty that doth attend the duty.
 - a. Prayer and scripture reading may be difficult, but they are necessary for growth in grace and service to Jesus.
 2. Remedy: Consider that the Lord Jesus will make His services easy to you, by the sweet discovery of himself to your souls, whilst you are in his service.
 3. Remedy: To dwell upon the hard and difficult things that the Lord Jesus hath passed through for your temporal, spiritual, and eternal good.
 4. Remedy: Consider that great reward and glorious recompense that doth attend those that cleave to the service of the Lord in the face of all difficulties and discouragements.
- iv. Device: Between fellow Christians, by working them first to be strange, and then to divide, and then to be bitter and jealous, and then 'too bite and devour on another' (Gal. 5:15).⁷⁴
1. Remedy: To dwell more upon one another's graces than upon one another's weaknesses and infirmities.
 2. Remedy: Consider that love and union makes most for your own safety and security.
 - a. The outside world is fighting against Christians, which makes the fellowship of the church all the more important.
 3. Remedy: To dwell upon those commands of God that do require you to love one another.
 4. Remedy: To dwell more upon these choice and sweet things wherein you agree, than upon those things wherein you differ.
 5. Remedy: To dwell upon the miseries of discord.

⁷³ Ibid. 117-121.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 198-211.

6. Remedy: Consider that it is no disparagement to you to be first in seeking peace and reconciliation, but rather an honor to you, that you have begun to seek peace.
 7. Remedy: For saints to join together and walk together in the ways of grace and holiness so far as they do agree, making the word their only touchstone and judge of their actions.
- d. Motivation to pursue holiness and kill sin is found in the promises of God in Scripture. (Note: the list below is by no means exhaustive but rather to give a glimpse of the promises in Scripture.)
- i. God promises to be with His followers (Is. 41:10; Mt. 28:20). This promise is the ground to not fear because God will uphold His followers, and this includes in the fight against sin.
 - ii. Jesus promises peace to His followers in the midst of a world of hostility. The basis of this promise is that Jesus has overcome the world (Jn. 16:33). The strength to endure tribulation would certainly include the pursuit of holiness.
 - iii. God, who began the good work of salvation will see it through to its completion (Phil. 1:6). Since holiness is included in the end of salvation, God will make sure His followers are holy.
 - iv. Jesus promises to give rest to those who are labor and are heavy laden (Mt. 11:28). This means God will grant rest for the souls of those who are seeking to obey Him in the putting of sin to death. The struggle will be fierce, but God grants rest for the soul in the midst of it.
 - v. To the seven churches in Revelation 1-2, there is promise that the one who conquers will be saved in the end. The promise of salvation, redemption, of sitting with Christ, being clothed in white garments are meant to motivate the Christian to carry on.
- e. Christians cannot apply the promises flippantly or as an excuse to continue in sin that must be killed.
- i. Owen says that it is necessary to “load thy conscience with the guilt of it.”⁷⁵
 1. He says to look at the law and to see the holiness of God and allow the weight of one’s own sin to overwhelm. It can be far too easy to apply to work of Christ as a balm to quiet guilt, rather than as the basis for pursuing holiness.
 2. He writes, “Tell thy conscience that it cannot manage any evidence to the purpose that thou art free from the *condemning* power of sin, whilst thy *unmortified* lust lies in thy heart”.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen: Sin and Temptation*, ed. W. H. Goold, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 57.

- a. To be content with sin in one’s heart, and to allow it to flourish because of the work of Christ is to misunderstand the work of Christ.
 - b. Owen is not teaching perfectionism. He is not implying that a Christian must be perfect in order to be saved. What he is teaching though, is the need to struggle and make war against sin, for an indifferent attitude toward it is a sign of either immaturity or unbelief. Neither should be acceptable for a follower of Christ. After all, 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, “but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”” It is because God is holy that Peter commands Christians to be holy in all one’s conduct. Nothing is excluded from being holy.
- 3. He says to “Bring *thy lust to the gospel*, —not for relief, but for father conviction of its guilt.”⁷⁷
 - a. One must look at the cross of Christ, as Jesus is hanging on the cross for sin, bearing the full weight of the curse, and then ask if this is so insignificant that one would continue to sin?
 - b. Owen says that Christians should ask, “Do I account communion with him of so little value, that for this vile lust’s sake I have scarce left him any room in my heart?”⁷⁸
 - c. This should rightly break the heart of the believer and should aid in the seeking of putting sin to death.
- f. Christians cannot grow proud in their endeavor and success, lest they fall into a different pattern of sin.
 - i. Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.”
 - 1. It is far too easy for someone to believe he is secure, only to find himself in danger all the more.
 - 2. An individual may look down on a recovering drug addict, while continuing to make an idol of his sobriety.
 - ii. In order to combat this, Owen recommends, “Be much in thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God and thine infinite, inconceivable distance from him.”⁷⁹
 - 1. A proper view of God will rightly humble any man, as it did Job and Habakkuk (Job 42:5-6; Hab. 3:16).
 - 2. No matter how holy an individual is in this life, he is still infinitely below God. This should lead, not to despair, but to humility. It

⁷⁷ Ibid. 58.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 63.

should not lead to despair because the God who is infinitely above man gave His Son in order to deliver him from his sinfulness.

- g. Practical steps to take.
 - i. Hate the sin.
 - 1. The Christian must hate the sin itself, as an affront to the holiness of God, rather than simply hating the consequences of the sin.
 - 2. No sin will be warred against if it is not seen as the enemy.
 - ii. Understand one's own natural weaknesses and when one is at his weakest.
 - 1. In the same way that a Christian must be on the lookout for the tactics of Satan, he must also be aware of moments he often gives in to temptations.
 - 2. Stress, hunger, and tired are often moments in which a person's guard may be down, and sin can creep in without one noticing before it is too late.
 - 3. Each individual is different, and so each individual must know his own disposition.
 - iii. Seek accountability.
 - 1. Having faithful friends who can hold one another accountable will allow a greater opportunity for success in the fight against sin.
 - 2. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken."
 - a. The enemy is seeking to destroy Christians and having a group of individuals to fight alongside will make it all the harder to be defeated.
 - 3. James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."
 - a. This implies a fellowship of a smaller group in which this type of confession can take place.
 - iv. Be diligent in Bible reading and prayer.
 - 1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "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."
 - a. Scripture is sufficient to ensure that the man of God is equipped for every good work.
 - 2. Jesus, in combatting temptations from Satan, says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4).
 - a. This shows that Scripture is key in fighting against Satan, as well as that the Word of God is what gives life. A Christian cannot live without it, by choice.

3. When Jesus encounters a demon-possessed boy, He tells His disciples that there are types of demons that cannot be driven out by anything but prayer (Mk. 9:29).
 4. Christians are to cast all their anxieties on Christ for He cares (1 Pet. 5:7). These anxieties would include sin that must be mortified.
- v. Be active in a local church.
1. The church is the body of Christ, and provides the perfect opportunity for growth in godliness, confession of sin, and the worship of the triune God.
 2. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."
 - a. Christians are to stir up one another to love and good works, and this will only take place if the body is together consistently.
 - b. Therefore, consistent attendance and involvement in the local church is necessary in the fight against sin.
- vi. Put protections and barriers in place so that sin might not gain a foothold.
1. Hebrews 12:2 says to lay aside every weight and sin that clings so close together, which implies that there are some things that should be set aside that may not be sinful in-and-of themselves but hold one back from pursuing Christ.
 2. Examples:
 - a. If one struggles with comparing one's life with others, then social media may need to be set aside. Jealously, covetousness, and ingratitude can grow against God if one is constantly looking at others on social media.
 - b. If one struggles with pornography, then limiting internet access may be necessary to aid in the fight against sin.
 - c. If one struggles with drunkenness, going to the bar in which he normally drinks in order to 'hang out with friends' will be putting him in grave danger of falling back into sin.
 - d. If one struggles with pride, then he must make an effort to be humble when opportunities arise. He must choose to take the lowest seat, when he would naturally take the best.
 3. Owen writes, "Know that he that dares dally with occasions of sin will dare to sin."⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Ibid. 62.

- vii. Work to identify blind spots.
 - 1. There are many sins that are culturally acceptable that Christians tolerate and propagate unawares.
 - a. Gossip and slandering one another is a common practice, but Paul places them alongside other sins such as murder, quarrelling, jealousy, and hostility (Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:20).
 - b. Lust is preyed upon in advertising, TV shows, and movies, in which Christians often flock to see. The conscience has become so numb to the images that they often no longer register as sinful. Jesus, on the other hand, says to cut out the eye if it causes lust, for it is better to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two be thrown into hell (Mt. 5:27-30).
 - c. Neglecting to worship with the church is prevalent, in which attendance once or twice a month is viewed as regularly attending. Hebrews 10:25 commands Christians to not neglect to meet together. This takes place often when other, far less eternally important commitments take precedence including, sports, work that can be scheduled for another time, frequent travel, or sleep. None of these should be acceptable for a Christian.
 - d. A critical attitude toward one another, rather than a generous heart. Christians should be quick to forgive, quick to give the benefit of the doubt, and quick to listen and serve (Mt. 18:22; Gal. 5:13; Jam. 1:19). This is seen in what is written on social media, as Christians are critical of one another, the church, or a variety of other examples.
 - e. Disobeying the government in the name of individual 'rights'. Paul, in the midst of a far more repressive government commands Christians to submit to governing authorities because it is ultimately submitting to Christ. However, culture often mistakes rights with 'whatever I would like to do'. There is a time to oppose the government, and that is when the gospel is at stake. When it is not, Christians are to submit (Rom. 13:1-7).
 - 2. Christians must strive to identify these and put them, as well as any others, to death.
- h. Always look to Christ.
 - i. Sin will never be killed apart from looking to Jesus Christ, for it is His death that means the end of the sin in the believer's life.

- ii. Owen gives several ways in which the believer is to look to Christ for aid in killing sin:⁸¹
 - 1. There is provision in Christ for deliverance.
 - a. He reminds his readers: “By faith ponder on this, that though thou art no way able in or by thyself to get the conquest over thy distemper, though thou are even weary of contending, and art utterly ready to faint, yet that there is enough in Jesus Christ to yield thee relief (Phil. 4:13).”⁸²
 - b. Christ will never lack the grace necessary to help His followers diligently seek holiness.
 - 2. Expect relief from Christ.
 - a. He desires our holiness and is ready to provide relief for those who are willing to follow.
 - b. It is key to understand that those who seek relief must do so in His way, seeking to kill it in total, and not leave room for future sin. Owen rightly says, “He that expects any thing from a man, applies himself to the ways and means whereby it may be obtained.”⁸³
 - c. His Word must be followed. It is not optional in the fight against sin.
 - 3. Consider his mercifulness, tenderness, and kindness, as He is our great High Priest at the right hand of God (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15-16).
 - 4. Consider His faithfulness to keep His promises.
 - a. If Christ be chosen for the foundation of our supply, he will not fail us.⁸⁴

⁸¹ These are found in Ibid. 79-85.

⁸² Ibid. 79.

⁸³ Ibid. 83.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Recommended Reading:

- *The Mortification of Sin*: John Owen (This is most readily available in *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*: John Owen, Kelly Kopic, and Justin Taylor)
- *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*: Thomas Brooks
- *Grand Design*: Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock
- *Men and Women in the Church and What does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?:* Kevin DeYoung
- *Is God anti-gay?:* Sam Allberry

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important that man was created on the sixth day?
2. What does it mean for man and woman to complement one another?
3. What is the image of God?
4. Why does an understanding of the creation order helpful in discussing many culturally hot topics, including gender and same-sex marriage?
5. How are the three words used in the Bible for sin similar and distinct?
6. How does the presence of the promise of deliverance in the midst of the curses bring comfort to believers?
7. Which view of the spreading of sin do you believe and why?
8. How have we as individuals and as a society, failed to take sin as seriously as the Bible does?
9. Why does Scripture use such graphic language when discussing our task of fighting sin?
10. How does the Holy Spirit work in the mortification of sin?
11. How is the work of Christ the center of this work?
12. What are some practical steps that you can apply to your life to aid in your own fighting against sin?
13. Do you have someone to keep you accountable?
14. What are some other sinful blind spots that are in your life that should be put to death rather than tolerated?
15. What are some other ways in which Satan can entice us to sin? What are the remedies that should be taken to thwart his plans?
16. How can we too quickly apply promises to our hearts without taking the necessary steps to fight against sin?

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