

CHAPTER 2.

The principal assertion concerning the necessity of mortification proposed to confirmation — Mortification the duty of the best believers, ^{<SIB>}Colossians 3:5; ^{<KOT>}1 Corinthians 9:27 — Indwelling sin always abides; no perfection in this life, ^{<IBD>}Philippians 3:12; ^{<KBD>}1 Corinthians 13:12; ^{<GIB>}2 Peter 3:18; ^{<KBT>}Galatians 5:17, etc. — The activity of abiding sin in believers, ^{<BIZ>}Romans 7:23; ^{<SIB>}James 4:5; ^{<SIZ>}Hebrews 12:1 — Its fruitfulness and tendency — Every lust aims at the height in its kind — The Spirit and new nature given to contend against indwelling sin, ^{<KBT>}Galatians 5:17; ^{<GIB>}2 Peter 1:4, 5; ^{<BIZ>}Romans 7:23 — The fearful issue of the neglect of mortification, ^{<GIB>}Revelation 3:2; ^{<SIB>}Hebrews 3:13 — The first general principle of the whole discourse hence confirmed — Want of this duty lamented.

HAVING laid this foundation, a brief confirmation of the fore-mentioned principal deductions will lead me to what I chiefly intend, —

I. *That 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.*

So the apostle, ^{<SIB>}Colossians 3:5, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” Whom speaks he to? Such as were “risen with Christ,” verse 1; such as were “dead” with him, verse 3; such as whose life Christ was, and who should “appear with him in glory,” verse 4. Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you. Your being dead with Christ virtually, your being quickened with him, will not excuse you from this work. And our Savior tells us how his Father deals with every branch in him that beareth fruit, every true and living branch. “He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit,” ^{<BIB>}John 15:2. He prunes it, and that not for a day or two, but whilst it is a branch in this world. And the apostle tells you what was his practice, ^{<KOT>}1 Corinthians 9:27, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” “I do it,” saith he, “daily; it is the work of my life: I omit it not; this is my business.” And if this were the work and business of Paul, who was so incomparably exalted in grace, revelations, enjoyments, privileges, consolations, above the ordinary measure of believers, where may we possibly bottom an

exemption from this work and duty whilst we are in this world? Some brief account of the reasons hereof may be given: —

1. Indwelling sin always *abides* whilst we are in this world; therefore it is always to be mortified. The vain, foolish, and ignorant disputes of men about perfect keeping the commands of God, of perfection in this life, of being wholly and perfectly dead to sin, I meddle not now with. It is more than probable that the men of those abominations never knew what belonged to the keeping of any one of God's commands, and are so much below perfection of degrees, that they never attained to a perfection of parts in obedience or universal obedience in sincerity. And, therefore, many in our days who have talked of perfection have been wiser, and have affirmed it to consist in knowing no difference between good and evil. Not that they are perfect in the things we call good, but that all is alike to them, and the height of wickedness is their perfection. Others who have found out a new way to it, by denying original, indwelling sin, and attempering the spirituality of the law of God unto men's carnal hearts, as they have sufficiently discovered themselves to be ignorant of the life of Christ and the power of it in believers, so they have invented a new righteousness that the gospel knows not of, being vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds. For us, who dare not be wise above what is written, nor boast by other men's lines of what God hath not done for us, we say that indwelling sin lives in us, in some measure and degree, whilst we are in this world. We dare not speak as "though we had already attained, or were already perfect," ^{<SIB2>}Philippians 3:12. Our "inward man is to be renewed day by day" whilst here we live, ^{<TOM6>}2 Corinthians 4:16; and according to the renovations of the new are the breaches and decays of the old. Whilst we are here we "know but in part," ^{<GIC2>}1 Corinthians 13:12, having a remaining darkness to be gradually removed by our "growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," ^{<GIB8>}2 Peter 3:18; and

"the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would," ^{<RST>}Galatians 5:17:

and are therefore defective in our obedience as well as in our light, ^{<GIB1>}John 1:8. We have a "body of death," ^{<RIZ4>}Romans 7:24; from whence we are not delivered but by the death of our bodies, ^{<SIB2>}Philippians 3:21. Now, it being our duty to mortify, to be killing of sin whilst it is in us, we must

be at work. He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave striking before the other ceases living, doth but half his work, ^{<R09>}Galatians 6:9; ^{<R17>}Hebrews 12:1; ^{<R00>}2 Corinthians 7:1.

2. Sin doth not only still abide in us, but is still *acting*, still laboring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh. 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. Sin doth not only abide in us, but

“the law of the members is still rebelling against the law of the mind,” ^{<R23>}Romans 7:23;

and “the spirit that dwells in us lusteth to envy,” ^{<R05>}James 4:5. It is always in continual work; “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,” ^{<R17>}Galatians 5:17; lust is still tempting and conceiving sin, ^{<R14>}James 1:14; in every moral action it is always either inclining to evil, or hindering from that which is good, or disframing the spirit from communion with God. It inclines to evil. “The evil which I would not, that I do,” saith the apostle, ^{<R19>}Romans 7:19. Whence is that? Why, “Because in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” And it hinders from good: “The good that I would do, that I do not,” verse 19; — “Upon the same account, either I do it not, or not as I should; all my holy things being defiled by this sin.” “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” ^{<R17>}Galatians 5:17. And it unframes our spirit, and thence is called “The sin that so easily besets us,” ^{<R17>}Hebrews 12:1; on which account are those grievous complaints that the apostle makes of it, ^{<R07>}Romans 7. So that sin is always acting, always conceiving, always seducing and tempting. Who can say that he had ever anything to do with God or for God, that indwelling sin had not a hand in the corrupting of what he did? And this trade will it drive more or less all our days. If, then, sin will be always acting, if we be not always mortifying, we are lost creatures. He that stands still and suffers his enemies to double blows upon him without resistance, will undoubtedly be conquered in the issue. If sin be subtle, watchful, strong, and always at work in the business of killing our souls, and we be slothful, negligent, foolish, in proceeding to the ruin thereof, can we expect a comfortable event? There is not a day but sin

foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed on; and it will be so whilst we live in this world.

I shall discharge him from this duty who can bring sin to a composition, to a cessation of arms in this warfare; if it will spare him any one day, in any one duty (provided he be a person that is acquainted with the spirituality of obedience and the subtlety of sin), let him say to his soul, as to this duty, "Soul, take thy rest." The saints, whose souls breathe after deliverance from its perplexing rebellion, know there is no safety against it but in a constant warfare.

3. 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*. The apostle tells us what the works and fruits of it are, ^{REF}Galatians 5:19-21,

"The works of the flesh are manifest, which are, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."

You know what it did in David and sundry others. Sin aims always at the utmost; every time it rises up to tempt or entice, might it have its own course, it would go out to the utmost sin in that kind. Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could; every covetous desire would be oppression, every thought of unbelief would be atheism, might it grow to its head. Men may come to that, that sin may not be heard speaking a scandalous word in their hearts, — that is, provoking to any great sin with scandal in its mouth; but yet every rise of lust, might it have its course, would come to the height of villainy: it is like the grave, that is never satisfied. And herein lies no small share of the deceitfulness of sin, by which it prevails to the hardening of men, and so to their ruin, ^{REF}Hebrews 3:13, — it is modest, as it were, in its first motions and proposals, but having once got footing in the heart by them, it constantly makes good its ground, and presseth on to some farther degrees in the same kind. This new acting and pressing forward makes the soul take little notice of what an entrance to a falling off from God is already made; it thinks all is indifferent well if there be no farther progress; and so far as the soul is made insensible of any sin, — that is, as to such a sense as the

gospel requireth, — so far it is hardened: but sin is still pressing forward, and that because it hath no bounds but utter relinquishment of God and opposition to him; that it proceeds towards its height by degrees, making good the ground it hath got by hardness, is not from its nature, but its deceitfulness. Now nothing can prevent this but mortification; that withers the root and strikes at the head of sin every hour, so that whatever it aims at it is crossed in. 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.

4. This is one main reason why the Spirit and the new nature is given unto us, — that we may have a principle within whereby to oppose sin and lust.

“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.” Well! and what then? Why,
 “The Spirit also lusteth against the flesh,” ^{<BIB>}Galatians 5:17.

There is a propensity in the Spirit, or spiritual new nature, to be acting against the flesh, as well as in the flesh to be acting against the Spirit: so ^{<BIB>}2 Peter 1:4, 5. It is our participation of the divine nature that gives us an escape from the pollutions that are in the world through lust; and, ^{<BIB>}Romans 7:23, there is a law of the mind, as well as a law of the members. Now this is, first, the most unjust and unreasonable thing in the world, when two combatants are engaged, to bind one and keep him up from doing his utmost, and to leave the other at liberty to wound him at his pleasure; and, secondly, the foolishest thing in the world to bind him who fights for our eternal condition, [salvation?] and to let him alone who seeks and violently attempts our everlasting ruin. The contest is for our lives and souls. Not to be daily employing the Spirit and new nature for the mortifying of sin, is to neglect that excellent succor which God hath given us against our greatest enemy. If we neglect to make use of what we have received, God may justly hold his hand from giving us more. His graces, as well as his gifts, are bestowed on us to use, exercise, and trade with. Not to be daily mortifying sin, is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God, who hath furnished us with a principle of doing it.

5. Negligence in this duty casts the soul into a perfect contrary condition to that which the apostle affirms was his, ^{<BIB>}2 Corinthians 4:16, “Though

our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” In these the inward man perisheth, and the outward man is renewed day by day. Sin is as the house of David, and grace as the house of Saul. *Exercise* and *success* are the two main cherishers of grace in the heart; when it is suffered to lie still, it withers and decays: the things of it are ready to die, ^{<BIB>}Revelation 3:2; and sin gets ground towards the hardening of the heart, ^{<BIB>}Hebrews 3:13. This is that which I intend: by the omission of this duty grace withers, lust flourisheth, and the frame of the heart grows worse and worse; and the Lord knows what desperate and fearful issues it hath had with many. Where sin, through the neglect of mortification, gets a considerable victory, it breaks the bones of the soul, ^{<BIB>}Psalm 31:10, ^{<BIB>}Psalm 51:8, and makes a man weak, sick, and ready to die, ^{<BIB>}Psalm 38:3-5, so that he cannot look up, ^{<BIB>}Psalm 40:12, ^{<BIB>}Isaiah 33:24; and when poor creatures will take blow after blow, wound after wound, foil after foil, and never rouse up themselves to a vigorous opposition, can they expect anything but to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that their souls should bleed to death? 2 John 8. Indeed, it is a sad thing to consider the fearful issues of this neglect, which lie under our eyes everyday. See we not those, whom we knew humble, melting, broken-hearted Christians, tender and fearful to offend, zealous for God and all his ways, his Sabbaths and ordinances, grown, through a neglect of watching unto this duty, earthly, carnal, cold, wrathful, complying with the men of the world and things of the world, to the scandal of religion and the fearful temptation of them that know them? The truth is, what between placing mortification in a rigid, stubborn frame of spirit, which is for the most part earthly, legal, censorious, partial, consistent with wrath, envy, malice, pride, on the one hand, and pretences of liberty, grace, and I know not what, on the other, true evangelical mortification is almost lost amongst us: of which afterward.

6. It is our duty to be “perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” ^{<BIB>}2 Corinthians 7:1; to be “growing in grace” everyday, ^{<BIB>}1 Peter 2:2, ^{<BIB>}2 Peter 3:18; to be “renewing our inward man day by day,” ^{<BIB>}2 Corinthians 4:16. Now, this cannot be done without the daily mortifying of sin. Sin sets its strength against every act of holiness, and against every degree we grow to. Let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness who walks not over the bellies of his lusts. He who doth not kill sin in his way

takes no steps towards his journey's end. He who finds not opposition from it, and who sets not himself in every particular to its mortification, is at peace with it, not dying to it.

This, then, is the first general principle of our ensuing discourse:

Notwithstanding the meritorious mortification, if I may so speak, of all and every sin in the cross of Christ; notwithstanding the real foundation of universal mortification laid in our first conversion, by conviction of sin, humiliation for sin, and the implantation of a new principle opposite to it and destructive of it; — yet sin doth so remain, so act and work in the best of believers, whilst they live in this world, that the constant daily mortification of it is all their days incumbent on them. Before I proceed to the consideration of the next principle, I cannot but by the way complain of many professors of these days, who, instead of bringing forth such great and evident fruits of mortification as are expected, scarce bear any leaves of it. There is, indeed, a broad light fallen upon the men of this generation, and together therewith many spiritual gifts communicated, which, with some other considerations, have wonderfully enlarged the bounds of professors and profession; both they and it are exceedingly multiplied and increased. Hence there is a noise of religion and religious duties in every corner, preaching in abundance, — and that not in an empty, light, trivial, and vain manner, as formerly, but to a good proportion of a spiritual gift, — so that if you will measure the number of believers by light, gifts, and profession, the church may have cause to say, “Who hath born me all these?” But now if you will take the measure of them by this great discriminating grace of Christians, perhaps you will find their number not so multiplied. Where almost is that professor who owes his conversion to these days of light, and so talks and professes at such a rate of spirituality as few in former days were, in any measure, acquainted with (I will not judge them, but perhaps boasting what the Lord hath done in them), that doth not give evidence of a miserably unmortified heart? If vain spending of time, idleness, unprofitableness in men's places, envy, strife, variance, emulations, wrath, pride, worldliness, selfishness, ~~and~~ ¹ Corinthians 1, be badges of Christians, we have them on us and amongst us in abundance. And if it be so with them who have much light, and which, we hope, is saving, what shall we say of some who would be accounted religious and yet despise gospel light, and for the duty we have

in hand, know no more of it but what consists in men's denying themselves sometimes in outward enjoyments, which is one of the outmost branches of it, which yet they will seldom practice? The good Lord send out a spirit of mortification to cure our distempers, or we are in a sad condition!

There are two evils which certainly attend every unmortified professor; — the first, in himself; the other, in respect of others: —

1. In himself. Let him pretend what he will, he hath *slight thoughts of sin*; at least, of sins of daily infirmity. The root of an unmortified course is the digestion of sin without bitterness in the heart. When a man hath confirmed his imagination to such an apprehension of grace and mercy as to be able, without bitterness, to swallow and digest daily sins, that man is at the very brink of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Neither is there a greater evidence of a false and rotten heart in the world than to drive such a trade. To use the blood of Christ, which is given to *cleanse* us, ^{<600>}1 John 1:7, ^{<3024>}Titus 2:14; the exaltation of Christ, which is to give us *repentance*, ^{<4483>}Acts 5:31; the doctrine of grace, which teaches us to *deny all ungodliness*, ^{<3021>}Titus 2:11, 12, to countenance sin, is a rebellion that in the issue will break the bones. At this door have gone out from us most of the professors that have apostatized in the days wherein we live. For awhile they were most of them under convictions; these kept them unto duties, and brought them to profession; so they “escaped the pollutions that are in the world, through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,” ^{<6020>}2 Peter 2:20: but having got an acquaintance with the doctrine of the gospel, and being weary of duty, for which they had no principle, they began to countenance themselves in manifold neglects from the doctrine of grace. Now, when once this evil had laid hold of them, they speedily tumbled into perdition.

2. To others. It hath an evil influence on them on a twofold account: —

(1.) It *hardens* them, by begetting in them a persuasion that they are in as good condition as the best professors. Whatever they see in them is so stained for want of this mortification that it is of no value with them. They have a zeal for religion; but it is accompanied with want of forbearance and universal righteousness. They deny prodigality, but with worldliness; they separate from the world, but live wholly to themselves,

taking no care to exercise loving-kindness in the earth; or they talk spiritually, and live vainly; mention communion with God, and are every way conformed to the world; boasting of forgiveness of sin, and never forgiving others. And with such considerations do poor creatures harden their hearts in their unregeneracy.

(2.) They *deceive* them, in making them believe that if they can come up to their condition it shall be well with them; and so it grows an easy thing to have the great temptation of repute in religion to wrestle withal, when they may go far beyond them as to what appears in them, and yet come short of eternal life. But of these things and all the evils of unmortified walking, afterward.