

# A Summary of How to Kill Sin

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Romans 8. And I'm sure if you are familiar at all with your Bibles, you have read the verse that I want to look at. You're familiar with it. You know it. Verse 13. "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die." Now, just right there, think about what the flesh is. If you look back up in v. 7, you see some interesting things about the flesh. You guys know, Romans 8 is basically this comparison. What you have is the comparison of the life lived in the flesh and the life lived in the what? Spirit. So you have true Christianity against that which is not Christianity. That's the comparison back and forth. As you read through the chapter, you can see that. Paul is contrasting very specifically those in the flesh, those in the Spirit. Those with the mind on the flesh. Those with the mind on the Spirit. Back and forth it goes.

A quick look at v. 7, and you see what is very characteristic of those in the flesh: They're at enmity, depending on the translation you have. Enmity. They are hostile to God. And they not only don't keep His commandments and do His Word, the Scripture there says they can't. Okay, when you come to v. 13, we've got the people in the flesh. They die. So listen, if this basically characterizes your life, that you do your own thing - that's what you need to see about v. 7 back up there is living in the flesh is not just you go off to the saloon, hang out in the bars, and you're involved in the wild parties all the time. Living in the flesh is just simply this: you're not going to have God tell you what to do. I mean, that's it. That's what you see in v. 7. That's characteristic of those who live in the flesh. V. 13, "if you live according to the flesh, you will die." Lay it down. He's not opening this up for debate. It's a straight deal here, folks. If you live according to the flesh, you die. Basically, if your life is characterized by doing what you want to do and not really having regard for what God wants you to do, all you really have to do to live in the flesh, folks, you can be moral. You don't have to be wild. You don't have to be out of control. Just say I'm going to do things my way and you're going to die.

Okay, but if you, by the Spirit - "if by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Let me tell you something about the life in Christ. This is probably the greatest external characteristic of true Christianity in all the Bible. You think about it. You go to 1 John, what do you find? You find: if you say you know Him and you don't keep His commandments, what's true about you? You're a liar. The truth isn't in you. I mean, what you have right here is this, folks: live the way you want to live, you die. Live the way God wants you to live, and you live.

Now, just for the sake of it, since we're right here, I think it's important that we probably go to the next verse, lest we have some kind of misunderstanding. You know, if we just had v. 13 all by itself, it would almost seem to say what? You almost have this idea that if you put to death the deeds of the body, what happens? You get eternal life. It almost sounds like you work it out, right? Well, Paul realizes that it has that sound to it, so when he goes to v. 14, he immediately clarifies himself. And you see, v. 14 in your Bibles starts with "for." Or if you have an NIV, it starts with "because." It's because he's going to explain. He's not moving on to a new subject. He is just going to go in v. 14 to go a little deeper into what he was saying. "For all who are led..." All who are thus led by the Spirit. To do what? To put to death the deeds of the body.

"All who are thus led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." Now look, this is what he's saying. He's saying if you put to death sin, you will live. Now you don't live because you put to death the deeds of the body. You live because you're a child of God. You've been born again. That's what he's saying there. The whole point is this is an evidence, not a cause. It's an evidence of those who have eternal life. Now look, we can say this about anybody. Anybody comes to this church, anybody a member of this church, anybody that we deal with out in this community here, we know this, if we come across them and they tell us they're Christians, this better characterize their life because Paul says you live. John says you're a child of God if you give this characteristic evidence that it is common in your life. It is the general characteristic. It is the general run of your life that you kill sin.

Listen, you cannot say - how many times have you heard this? We get this in our church. You guys have probably heard it here. Well, you know, I was a teenager and I professed Christ back when I was 14, but you know I ran off into all this kind of sin, but I know I was a Christian. Now, wait a second. How do you know you were a Christian? Well, I just know. Or I had this experience or I did this. Now listen, this is not a call to Christian perfection by any stretch of the imagination. This doesn't have anything to do with living day after day with absolutely no sin in your life. But what this is is characteristic. This is definitely a pattern, folks. And I can look at anybody and I can make a general assessment about their life based on this text. I mean, Paul lays it down here. There is a vital connection between putting to death sin and life. I'm telling you, every single person in heaven has lived this life of putting to death deeds of the body.

Now that's interesting. Obviously, he doesn't mean every deed of the body. He doesn't mean using your hand to help a widow. Obviously, he doesn't mean that. It's plain that what we have spoken about here is using the body, using facial expressions, using the tones of the voice, using sexual organs, using hands, using feet, using the body overall to carry out deeds of wickedness. We are to live a life of doing good.

Have you guys ever read that? I mean, you go to 2 John, you know what you have? John can say this: Look, we know children of God. We know those who are saved. And you know what he says there? They do good. 2 John. You read that sometime. He basically says we can know the saved from the lost. The saved do good. These people over here don't do good. This idea that Christians do good is a very biblical idea. You see, being saved is just about being saved from sin in its practice right here as much as being saved from its guilt, as much as being saved from the wrath of God. We are saved from the power of sin. All we have to do is go back to chapter 6 and you read in v. 14, "Sin will not have dominion over you." Folks, this is the working out of that. Sin will not dominate your life if you're a Christian. That's what that says. V. 13 of chapter 8 - you cannot make it say anything else. Purity of life. You as a Christian have been led by Christ through His Spirit to do battle with sin. If that is not characteristic of your life, then your life is not characteristic of the Christian life.

Now look, here's the thing. Okay, we've got to do this. We've got to kill sin. You know what? As I've really thought about this, I realize this: deeds of the body come from somewhere. So, it definitely is to our great advantage to figure out where they come from, because if you want to attack this thing; if you're going to do battle, we need to go to the root of the problem. And if you go back to chapter 6:12, you'll see exactly the root; exactly where these deeds come from. Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies..." Okay, see, right there

you've got the mortal bodies. Now remember what we have to put to death. We have to put to death these deeds of the body. Right here you have the mortal body. Sin is seeking to reign in the mortal body to make you obey, there, the body's passions. Now that's interesting. Here's what you've got. Sin is not plural here. It is singular. Which means it's not speaking about sins as in individual sins. It's speaking about sin as a power. Sin as a force. Sin as an evil force seeks to dominate. It seeks to rule. It seeks to reign in your body by what? By making you obey your body's passions.

You see that? Is that plain? Did I just make that up? That's there right? You guys see that. Well, what's key about that? Well, here's the thing, if I'm saved and the Spirit of God leads me, and listen, we do it by the Spirit. But we do it. This idea of putting to death deeds of the body - if you by the Spirit put to death deeds of the body, you will live. This isn't a kind of hyper-Calvinism. You know, we sit back and the Spirit of God's just going to purify me. You remember, the Scripture tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. There's a battle here, folks, and we fight it. We do it. Yes, we do it in the power of the Spirit. You can't do it outside of the Spirit. You can't do it outside of Christ. But in Christ, that which is impossible otherwise by nature when you're in the flesh is very possible. In fact, so possible that if you have life, you will put these things to death. And what you put to death is this: Sin seeking to rule in your bodies. Seeking to dominate by making you obey the passions of this body. Now listen, as I began to think about that, I thought, yeah, that's exactly what happens. I mean, think about when you sin. Think about the whole chemistry here. If you begin to dissect this thing, and you begin to pull it apart piece by piece, what happens? I sin. I use my mouth. I use my eyes. I use my hands in a way that I shouldn't use them. And I sin. When I do what? When I try to gratify some desire. That's what drives us to sin. But how?

And you know, as I began to contemplate both of these things and just mulling these things over in my head, I'm thinking okay, well, let's just look at desires. So I looked through the entire New Testament. Everywhere that word came up. And I'm trying to focus in on that and trying to find out about the character of these desires. And then also sin - not sins plural, but sin as a power. Let's look at that and go all the way through the New Testament and examine that, and even some places in the Old Testament. And what's very interesting is this, turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4:22. "Put off your old self..." I'm reading from the ESV. But you guys can kind of catch the drift here. Ephesians 4:22 if you've got a different translation. "Put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires." You see that right there? The word desires there - exact same one you've got back in Romans 6:12. Notice what it calls it: deceitful. You know something very interesting about these desires that sin seeks to have us obey is they are deceitful desires. But you know, then as you begin to study and you begin to think about the reality of sin.

Turn to Hebrews 3:13. I mean, basically, this is what we're confronted with when we sin. We have sin as a power who's an enemy in this, seeking to make us obey corrupt desires which is the enemy. Basically, there are two enemies here when it comes to my sin as a Christian. I've got sin as a power seeking to reign by making me obey sinful passions. And so I've got sin. I've got passions. If I can deal with those two dogs, I can nail this thing. Now, in 4:22 of Ephesians, what I wanted to show you is that these desires are called deceitful. Now what I want you to see right here in Hebrews, "Exhort one another every day as long as it is called today, that none of

you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Listen! Sin's power to have sway in your life goes only so far in the fact that it has the ability to deceive you. What I want you guys to understand is if I'm to put to death deeds of the body, and they come from sin trying to reign in my body - the sin is deceitful, the desires are deceitful. Guess what that tells me? It tells me I sin when I do what? When I believe a lie. You know how you put to death sin? When you stop believing the lie that you believe every time you do the sin. I'll guarantee you, those of you in this room that sin the most, are the most given to believe a lie. You're doing it because I'll tell you what, sin is stupid. It is asinine. Every time. It is destructive. It doesn't help you. It only separates. It only damages. It's only destructive.

And why do you do it? Because you buy into some lie. You know what, we see it in our kids. We see it in the lost. We've got a young man who's a member of our church, and just traded Christ for a woman. Why? Was that wise? Was that to his eternal benefit? Is that going to be helpful to him? Is that going to make him happy down the road? You know it won't. But see, it's not as though he's some alien and that's foreign to us. We've walked that path, folks. We have chosen sin, and even now as a Christian, when you choose sin, you do so because just like that young man you believe a lie. Every single time. You sin only when you believe a lie. Your pride is a lie. Your unrighteous anger is a lie. Your materialism, obsession with comfort, your greed, your idolatry, your covetousness, lust, jealousy - all lies. Whenever you give into sin, mark it down, you have bought a lie. And if you'll really come to grips with this, it will help you.

My brother, my sister, think about what lie you believe when you worry. What lie is it you've bought lock, stock, and barrel when you look with lust at a woman? What lie have you bought into when you interrupt others? Or feel superior? Or get angry? Or gossip? Or feel jealous? Or fight? Fight for comfort in this life? Or have to have your new toy? Count on it. There's a lie behind each one of these. Your struggle with sin is a struggle with lies. I guarantee you this. Those of you who sin most in this room, mark this down, are the ones most given to believe what is not true. You're the most gullible. You're the most ignorant. And you are the most deceived.

Now listen, I want to leave you guys with this thought. Because sometimes what happens is we have some difficulty getting a grasp on what that is. You can say, okay brother, I believe that. You've shown us. Sin, desires. They're deceitful. When I buy into them, I'm being deceived. You see, sometimes what's difficult though is figuring out what is the lie that I believe? Do you know one thing that I've seen? You know one thing that I've seen in Calvinistic circles, reformed circles? One lie that is so prevalent. And I'll guarantee you, the devil will have you believe this every time. It's the lie that I can't have victory. I am just doomed to perpetual failure.

Listen, folks. You may come to that conclusion by some distorted hyper-Calvinism, but you will not come to that conclusion by the Word of God. In fact, the verse we just looked at in Romans 8:13 tells me exactly otherwise. It tells me if the power of God is real in your life, if you're truly in Jesus Christ, you have His Spirit. If you have His Spirit, by that Spirit you will put these things to death. And one of the biggest lies that I have seen that Christians oftentimes fall into is this idea I am just wretched, I am just defeated, I just cannot have victory in this. I'll tell you what, you read Romans wrong if you're reading it that way. You look at Romans 6 and you look at v. 14. Sin will not have dominion over you. You look at v. 17. It says God makes men and women obedient from the heart. Sin, if you are a Christian, we are told, you are dead to sin.

Now, I'll tell you, those are strong expressions, but that does not just have to do with our justification before God. That has to do with the power of sin in a practical and demonstrable way in our lives. Folks, if you're not putting it to death, then you will die.

Now listen, that's one of the great lies that's believed. But there's another one. I can remember as a young Christian. I can remember as I was reading through my Old Testament. I was raised in a Catholic home. I was not exposed to the truth of the Word. And so when I was first saved, I didn't have a church. I was listening to John MacArthur on the radio. And I didn't have anybody mentoring me. I wasn't hooked in somewhere. As I'm reading through my Bible for the first time, this stuff is new. I read about David numbering the people and God came in and brought a plague. I read about one fellow reaching out and touching the ark and God striking him down dead, and I was scared. I began to think this God is not like I thought He was. In fact, I was finding God to be very terrifying.

Let me tell you something, there was a day - this struck me too - as a young Christian, there was a day when a prophet - you guys know about this. In Isaiah 6, a prophet, very famous prophet - probably the most famous one of all aside from Jesus Christ - at least Old Testament prophet. Isaiah. This man, he's probably one of the godliest men among the nation of the Hebrews at that time. He comes into the temple and he beholds the Lord high and lifted up. And I'm telling you, this guy, he saw this. You can be sure he went right to his knees. I mean, he probably covered up. The glory of the Lord, the train of His robe filled that temple, and the doorposts shook and you've got seraphim and they're shouting back and forth antiphonally: Holy, holy, holy! And the place is just in smoke and shaking and he's saying, "Woe is me!" You know what? You know what he was not doing right at that moment? He was not thinking about the young lady he passed on the way to the temple! He was not lusting over her! He was not thinking about going home and fighting with his wife! You know why? Because when you're confronted by the glory of the Lord - I'll tell you this, one of the lies you buy into when you sin is you buy into the lie that God is not what He is like. You forget who God is. You buy a lie that He is somewhat knocked down, subordinate, sub-standard, sub-biblical to what He really is in the Scriptures. You know why? You know what, he sees this, and the thought in his mind right now is not go gossip and back-stab somebody and be bitter over somebody. Because when you see God for who He is, that has a way of burning through all the falsehoods.

You see, one of the problems, folks, we buy into a small God. That is a lie we buy into when we sin. I'll tell you what, if the glory of the living Christ hovered at the end of your kitchen the way He did in the temple that day, when you go home tonight, you might not say the things you would otherwise say. You might not do the things you would otherwise do. And I'll tell you what, when Isaiah saw himself - when he saw God, he saw himself as well. And you see, that's one of the problems in our sin as well. We think way too highly of ourselves. Way too highly. We think our way. We think what we want trumps all. That's true every single time you sin, you totally blow off and cast off the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You despise it. You count it as a little thing and you certainly are exalting yourself. You know pride is behind every sin. You are exalting yourself. You know a lie you believe every time you sin? You believe you're pretty great. You believe your ways, your agenda, your needs trump Christ's commands.

Now listen, there may be a lot of other lies that you believe, but you know what? This does help. Listen, some people come along - Christians will come along and they'll say, "I've

tried to fight that sin." And I know they have. The guy's not lying to me. The guy's not trying to deceive me. I know that sin grieves that brother. I know it grieves him. I can see the grief on his face. I know he's prayed over that sin. I know he struggles over that sin. I know he's repented of that sin and he's been sincere. But then he says why do I keep going back to it? And you know what? It's because even though he may not like that sin, and even though he may be trying to fight it, he has never yet gotten to the root of the matter. He has never really gone after the lie that he believes every time he commits that sin. It will really help you, it will help me, it will help us if we come to grips - identify the sin. And then, figure out, what am I believing every time I give in to that? Because there is a thought process. We don't sin in a vacuum. There is thinking. We weigh things out. We do things. There's a perception. We size things up. We look at things from a standpoint of what is desirable. Remember, desires are in this thing, folks. We have to figure out how is it that those desires, how is it that sin is deceiving me? What lie am I buying into?

And I'll tell you this, once you identify the lie, how do you battle sin? How do you battle corrupt desires? I'll tell you, if they're both deceitful, your weapon to kill these things is truth. If lies and deception are at the root, truth. You've got to come to the place where you have a handle, you have a grip on what is true. You think with me. Nadab and Abihu laying there dead. They've been incinerated. Aaron was not all of a sudden prone to get angry with God. The Scripture said he held his peace. You better believe he held his peace. It didn't all of a sudden occur to him to get lazy with worship. It didn't all of a sudden occur to him to get sloppy as a Christian. It didn't all of a sudden occur to him. Why? Because the presence of God was so real in the midst of that. And I'll tell you, why do I keep bringing that back in? Because that has a whole lot to do with truth, folks. When you begin to see God more clearly, you begin to see the way things are more truly. You see, one of the problems we have, folks; one of the reasons sin is so rampant oftentimes in our lives or in our churches, is because the presence of God is so little felt and experienced. I'll tell you what, when the glory of the Lord descends on a church and the fear of God descends on people and there is a presence there and people begin to draw close, and there's at least some manifestation similar to that which was experienced by Isaiah or experienced by Job or experienced by Aaron - listen, sin begins to go out of the church. When people really begin to see God for who He is, and they begin to take that vision of God through their life, then putting to death the deeds of the body becomes something that is going to be more of a reality.

Do you guys see this connection with truth in all this? I mean, I hope you guys see this. I hope you guys see, first - I'm going to end with this. But just to kind of summarize this, there's a connection. You put to death the deeds of the body. That's evidence you're going to live. This is life and death, folks. Putting to death the deeds of the body. You've got sin. It's deceitful. Hebrews 3:13 says so. Ephesians 4:22 says that these desires, they're deceitful. You've got these things. Sin trying to make you obey these corrupt desires. This thing is deceitful. This thing is deceitful. You ought to do battle with this thing, folks. Truth is your weapon. You've got to nail truth. You begin to pinpoint the lies you believe when you sin. And you begin to attack that with truth. You begin to memorize those Scripture texts that lie in direct contradiction to that lie that you believe. That truth that is in direct opposition to that lie that you fall for. You begin to permeate yourself with the reality of the presence of God and begin to see Him how He is. You

begin to come to approaching day by day your Christian life from this perspective: I can have victory. No, not only, I can have it - I must have it. I will have it! And if I don't have it, I'm going to die. Not that I gain life by this battle, but I prove that I have life by this battle. I get this life to battle by becoming a child of God. By being born again. That's where this power's unleashed by the Spirit. And listen, the Spirit doesn't do it. You must do it by the power of the Spirit. He does it through you. Not aside from you. Not without you. He does it as you do it. He calls us to an impossible life, but we're given the third Person of the very Trinity to cause us to carry this thing out. And listen, this is no small matter. This is a life and death deal. This is not only a life and death deal, this is a really major church deal. Holiness.