

**The Gospel as it Really Is:
Romans simply Explained
Sanctification (7) Put sin to death!
Romans 8:13 & 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
September 21st 2025 MHC & MPC
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Let me tell you a little more about the dysfunctional marriage I mentioned two Sundays ago, so broken that the son came to the conclusion that the institution of marriage was

“an arrangement of life that is utterly destructive of the human soul.”

This is what it was like to live in that house:

“Mummy and Daddy were unaware that their everlasting bickering made their company all but unendurable.”

“Marital warfare was the air I learned to breathe.”

“Hardly a day of my life was spent without my being asked to take sides with one or the other.”

Why was the marriage such a mess? Let's start with the husband and with one problem: Norman squandered the family's money, leaving the family poor and resulting in financial arguments, trying to impress a friend of his.

On the wife's side, her son writes:

“Jean's unrivalled capacity to extract unhappiness from any situation, however neutral or cheerful, coloured all my early life.”

Jean turned every happy occasion into a miserable one.

Sadly, neither Norman or Jean were converted to Christ, to the best of my knowledge, but suppose they had come to faith: the Holy Spirit would have convicted both of them of the specific sins that were poisoning their marriage and by God's grace they would each be working on those particular failings as the years rolled on by. We'd find Norman would be dealing with his desire to have his ego inflated by wasteful spending & Jean would be working on her negativity which brought gloom into the family home.

On Sunday mornings we're making our way through Romans chapters 6-8 which are about “sanctification” the lifelong process whereby the Holy Spirit, in cooperation with the believer, makes us more holy, more like Jesus with every passing year.

Although the Lord has given every believer a new heart, a new nature, while we live in this old body, we still have an old Velcro sinful nature which sticks to us all our days. And explains:

- the perplexing frustration of Paul in Romans 7:15:

“For I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do..”

- His pained lament of 7:24:

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from the body of death?”

- And his joyful note of 7:25;

“Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (one day, in heaven, when I have a new body, the battle will be over!)

Why do we need to be sanctified? Because sanctification is the surest proofs we are true believers, born again by the Holy Spirit. A person who says “God was concerned about my sin so much that he sent his only beloved Son to suffer and die for them, but I’m not bothered by my sins; I’m just going to continue to think evil thoughts, speak evil words and do wicked deeds” such a person cannot possibly be a true believer. A desire to be holy, efforts empowered by the Spirit to become like Christ, are sure evidence that we have been born from on high.

Last Sunday we saw from Romans chapter 8:

We need to be reminded every day that we have been totally forgiven for all our sins, verse 1, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Without this basement foundational truth, we could easily fall into despair in this life-long battle with sin. “I’ve blown it, there’s no hope, God will never forgive me!”

*Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me*

We learnt that the Holy Spirit by whose omnipotent power Jesus Christ’s dead body was raised from the dead, dwells within every believer, Verse 9, “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ.” Put positively, “everyone who belongs to Jesus has his Spirit living within.” It is by the power of the Holy Spirit we are made holy.

We learnt that while the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we are not puppets on a divine string; we are called to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; we must choose to be controlled by the Spirit

*“Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature...”
(verse 12)*

Instead, we’re called, to be “led by the Spirit.” (verse 14)

And we learnt that living a holy life begins when we fix our thoughts on what the Spirit desires.

“those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires..” (v.5)

What do we allow into that endless stream of thoughts that fill our minds from the moment we wake to the moment we drop off to sleep?

Thoughts that arise from our sinful natures? Dark thoughts, anxious thoughts, unforgiving thoughts, bitter thoughts, proud thoughts, divisive thoughts, critical thoughts, jealous thoughts, lustful thoughts?

Or thoughts that are pleasing to the Spirit? Thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8)

The key to becoming holy, from the believer’s standpoint, is cultivating a godly mind. A mind that rejects evil thoughts and embraces holy thoughts, Bible thoughts. Even the world understands the power of our thoughts: The American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson, not a believer, said, “You are what you think all day long.”

Let’s go back to Norman and Jean, and their individual marital wrongdoings because this morning, as we end this series of sermons on becoming holy, I want each one of us to consider one present sin in our lives and ask ourselves– so this is a very practical sermon - how can I see the end of that sin? Let’s call repeating sins “besetting sins.” Sins that trip us up, time and again. Norman’s besetting sin was different from Jean’s sin. *This* believer’s besetting sin will be different from *that* believer’s besetting sin. It may be a *sin of thought*: a pattern of thoughts, a sequence of thoughts that I find myself falling into. It may be a *sin of speech*: a sharp tongue, or a negative tongue or a lying tongue. It may be a *sin of action*, of behaviour.

Whatever the besetting sin is, you & I know it’s there. The Holy Spirit has revealed it to you, either through his Word or through your relationship with his people: some of the disciples, for example, realised they were proud when together one day they discovered that they wanted to have higher honour than their fellow disciples.

How do you get rid of a besetting sin? That’s the simple question before us today. And the answer is in verse 13, which I will paraphrase like this, *“by the Spirit put to death the misdeeds of the body.”*

1. Understand that you cannot get rid of the sin on your own

Paul says “by the Spirit” with the Spirit’s power, not in your own power. Isn’t that the problem with New Year’s resolutions to “do better?” They rely on human willpower. I read somewhere that 80% of New Year resolutions fail by the second week of February! Why? Because I am weak, you are weak. Paul does not say “by your human power put sin to death” because he knows none of us have the power to change within us.

I think it was a Puritan writer—the Puritans were a sincere band of good Christians folk in the 1500s and 1600s—I think it was one of their number who said that you and I stand as much chance trying to become holy in our own strength as a chimney sweep stands trying to wash his face with a soot-filled chimney brush! In other words no chance!

The starting point in ridding ourselves of a besetting sin is to realise that we are totally powerless on our own.

2. Put the sin to death

Nevertheless, trusting in God's power, we are called to put the sin to death. *“Put to death the misdeeds of the body”*

Paul wants us to imagine our besetting sin as a horrible ugly slimy living beast in our lives that must be killed. There are two ways to kill an ugly slimy living thing, sorry children!

Either by radical action, by a single crushing blow. If your hand causes you to sin cut it off, if your eye causes you to sin gouge it out.

A friend mine, let’s call him John, years ago became addicted to a computer game—a mid-30s-some year old! He would come home after work, go on the game and waste hours of time, damaging family life. When a game has become an idol like that, it has become a sin. He came to me in desperation, what should he do? This kind of sin cannot be dealt piece meal, gradually, “play the game 3 hours next week, 2 hours the following” and so on. Do you know what we did? We put his computer in our loft where it stayed for many months!

Some sins can only be killed with radical action, a blow to the head. John's got to get rid of the computer, Norman's got to give up that friend he's trying to impress, who's draining the family's resources.

Other horrible ugly slimy sins, on the other hand, must be strangled slowly, by depriving them of their life-giving sustenance; the oxygen, the water, the food by which they stay alive.

Little by little as these life-giving provisions are removed over months and even years, for God is so patient with us, the ugly monstrous sin is starved to death and dis.

Take covetousness as an example—always wanting what other people have! The apparently greener grass on the other side of the fence. Never happy with your lot. How do you put covetousness to death? Probably not with a single blow; instead you ask yourself what influences in my life are feeding covetousness? Is it looking on Social Media at what other people have? Well then I must remove that social media app from my phone. Is it also hanging out with a crowd who are covetous? Then I must leave them.

We must each work this out for ourselves. Think of that besetting sin as monstrous ugly living beast and ask: what feeds it? And then go to work with fear and trembling, and starve it to death.

3. Rely on the Spirit's Power

“by the Spirit put to death the misdeeds of the flesh”

The same mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you! As you mortify your besetting sin, pray, “Lord I can’t do this on my own, please help me today, please empower me today.” Fill me with your Holy Spirit! As you mortify your besetting sin, wield the powerful sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, read God's Word, make it's truth the mood music of your whole life.

Motive?

Many years ago a good brother came up to me at the end of a sermon , I cannot remember the details but I was sharing an exhortation from the Scriptures. He said, “Roy you’ve told us what we should do, can you give me a motive, a reason to obey the Lord.” And so, as best I could, I shared with him the motive.

Why should I be holy? Why should I be sanctified? For what reason? What will it achieve?

Paul gives two motives... negative and positive...

“If you live according to the sinful nature you will die.”

If a believer does not put sin to death, they will “die” in every Biblical sense of that word: sorrow, guilt, sorrow, sadness, fear, lack of peace, lack of assurance, weakness, a wasted life, and so on.

“If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body you will live.”

“Live” in every sense of that word! Joy, and peace and power and assurance and usefulness in this world, like a “tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Everything they do will prosper.”

What powerful motives for holy living!