

Step three: By faith, believe that the promises of God are more satisfying than the passing pleasures of sin.

“Faith stands or falls on the truth that the future with God is more satisfying than the one promised by sin. When this truth is embraced and God is cherished above all, the power of sin is broken. The power of sin is the power of deceit. Sin has power through promising a false future. In temptation sin comes to us and says: ‘the future with God on his narrow way is hard and unhappy; but the way I promise is pleasant and satisfying.’ The power of sin is in the power of this lie.” – John Piper

Application:

Idol: COMFORT (Privacy, lack of stress, freedom)

Price We Will Pay: Reduced productivity
Greatest Nightmare: Stress, demands
Others Often Feel: Hurt
Problem Emotion: Boredom

Idol: APPROVAL (Affirmation, love, relationship)

Price We Will Pay: Less independence
Greatest Nightmare: Rejection
Others Often Feel: Smothered
Problem Emotion: Cowardice

Idol: CONTROL (Self-discipline, certainty, standards)

Price We Will Pay: Loneliness; spontaneity
Greatest Nightmare: Uncertainty
Others Often Feel: Condemned
Problem Emotion: Worry

Idol: POWER (Success, winning, influence)

Price We Will Pay: Burdened; responsibility
Greatest Nightmare: Humiliation
Others Often Feel: Used
Problem Emotion: Anger

Resources:

- *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, Tedd Tripp.
- http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/10/83_How_to_Kill_Sin_Part_1/
- http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/10/84_How_to_Kill_Sin_Part_2/
- http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/10/87_How_to_Kill_Sin_Part_3/
- *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, Kopic and Taylor eds.

The Idol Factory – Part 3

Defining idolatry

“An idol is not simply a statue of wood, stone, or metal; it is anything we love and pursue in place of God, and can also be referred to as a ‘false god’ or a ‘functional god.’ In biblical terms, an idol is something other than God that we set our hearts on (Luke 12:29; 1 Cor. 10:6), that motivates us (1 Cor. 4:5), that masters or rules us (Ps. 119:133), or that we serve (Matt. 6:24).” – Ken Sande

Discerning idolatry

“Sin is trying to quench our unquenchable soul-thirst anywhere but in God. Or, more subtly, sin is pursuing satisfaction in the right direction, but with lukewarm, halfhearted affections (Rev. 3:16).” – John Piper.

“Worship is transferring our affections from temporary false comforts (also known as idols) and placing them upon God. What are some of those temporary comforts we gravitate toward? To what or to whom do you turn after a bad day? Do you head for the refrigerator or the television to escape your pain? Are you satiated by food, sports, an “escape novel” or some other gratification mechanism? Please don’t misunderstand the point. None of these things are evil in their appropriate context. Yet if I use them to anesthetize the frustration of my day and hide from God during my “chill out” times, they become addictions.” – David Morris.

“John’s last line properly leaves us with that most basic question which God continually poses to each human heart. Has something or someone besides Jesus the Christ taken title to your heart’s trust, preoccupation, loyalty, service, fear and delight? It is a question bearing on the immediate motivation for one’s behavior, thoughts, and feelings. In the Bible’s conceptualization, the motivation question is the lordship question. Who or what ‘rules’ my behavior, the Lord or a substitute?” – David Powlison

X-ray questions:

- What do you love? Hate?
- What do you want, desire, crave, lust, and wish for? What desires do you serve and obey?
- What do you fear? What do you not want? What do you tend to worry about?
- What do you think you need? What are your felt needs?

Why do we need to know how to destroy idolatry?

1. **We are at war.** *“Is it not enough to make any heart tremble, to think of being brought into that estate wherein he should have slight thoughts of sin? Slight thoughts of grace, of mercy, of the blood of Christ, of the law, of heaven, and hell, come all in the same season. Take heed, this is that [which] your lust is working toward – the hardening of the heart, searing of the conscience, blinding of the mind, stupefying of the affections, and deceiving of the whole soul.”* – John Owen
2. **Our enemy is near:** Hebrews 3:12-13, *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*¹³ *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* We may become hardened by our sins, and thus care not for our dear Savior.

Therefore, *“... there can be no treaty of peace till once we lay down these weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight against heaven: nor can we expect to have our distemper cured if we be daily feeding on poison. Every willful sin gives a mortal wound to the soul and puts it at a greater distance from God and goodness...”* – Henry Scougal

3. **The stakes are higher than we can imagine.** *“One cannot win Christ at the end without faithfully running the course now.”* – Schriener and Canaday. By being careless with our fight against sin we will grieve the Holy Spirit, bring fresh wounds to Jesus (Heb. 6:6), and take away our usefulness to this generation.

“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” - C.S. Lewis

What does “put the deeds of the body to death” mean?

First, this is not a call to asceticism.

- Matt 15:18-20. *“But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.”*¹⁹ *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.”*²⁰ *These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”*
- Matthew 5:29-30 or Matthew 18:8 are literally not enough.
- *“Mortification of any sin must be by a supply of grace. Of ourselves we cannot do it.”* – John Owen.

Second, this is not a call to perfectionism.

- We will not permanently put sin to death in this life, so that we will never struggle again.

Third, this is not a call to passivism.

- *“... If by the Spirit you put to death...”*

How do you do this by the Spirit?

Step one: Allow the Spirit to bring a clear and abiding sense of the guilt and danger of sin.

- *“Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.”* – Thomas Chalmers
- *“It is the Spirit alone that can do, that does, this work to this purpose. And this is the first thing that the Spirit does in order to the mortification of any lust whatsoever – it convinces the soul of all the evil of it, cuts off all its pleas, discovers all its deceits, stops all its evasions, answers its pretenses, makes the soul own its abomination and lie down under the sense of it. Unless this be done all that follows is in vain.”* – John Owen
- Begin with the generals and descend to particulars.

Step two: Repent and set your mind on the things of the Spirit.

- **We don’t just say no to our idols.** We must, *“Rise mightily against the first actings of your distemper, its first conceptions; suffer it not to get the least ground. Do not say, “Thus far shall it go, and no farther.” If it have allowance for this one step, it will take another. It is impossible to fix bounds to sin. It is like water in a channel – if it once breaks out, it will have its course.”* – John Owen.
- **Focus on the true source of power to kill sin?** Galatians 3:5, *“Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith”* – by hearing with faith.
- **Our calling is to do this “by the Spirit”.**
 - 1 Cor. 2:13-14 - *“things of the Spirit”* are the words of God.
 - Word of God is the sword of the Spirit in Eph. 6:17 – swords are used for killing.
- **Praise God for the power to repent!**

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Destroying Idolatry

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Knowing God without knowing our own wretchedness makes for pride. Knowing our own wretchedness without knowing God makes for despair. Knowing Jesus Christ strikes the balance because He shows us both God and our own wretchedness. – Blaise Pascal.

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John’s last line properly leaves us with that most basic question which God continually poses to each human heart. Has something or someone besides Jesus the Christ taken title to your heart’s trust, preoccupation, loyalty, service, fear and delight? It is a question bearing on the immediate motivation for one’s behavior, thoughts, and feelings. In the Bible’s conceptualization, the motivation question is the lordship question. Who or what ‘rules’ my behavior, the Lord or a substitute? – David Powlison.

“I have affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness, very frequently to such a degree as to hold me in a kind of loud weeping...so that I have often been obliged to shut myself up. I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness and the badness of my heart than ever I had before my conversion...It is affecting to think how ignorant I was, when a young Christian, of the bottomless, infinite depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy, and deceit left in my heart.” – Jonathan Edwards.

"Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it while you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you." - Owen.

“Is it not enough to make any heart tremble, to think of being brought into that estate wherein he should have slight thoughts of sin? Slight thoughts of grace, of mercy, of the blood of Christ, of the law, of heaven, and hell, come all in the same season. Take heed, this is that [which] your lust is working toward – the hardening of the heart, searing of the conscience, blinding of the mind, stupefying of the affections, and deceiving of the whole soul.” Owen

"... we have never more reason to expect divine assistance than when we are doing our utmost endeavours" – Henry Scougal

"... there can be no treaty of peace till once we lay down these weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight against heaven: nor can we expect to have our distemper cured if we be daily feeding on poison. Every willful sin gives a mortal wound to the soul and puts it at a greater distance from God and goodness..." – Henry Scougal

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“As the inner light increases, you will see the imperfections which you have heretofore as basically much greater and more harmful than you had seen them up to the present...But this experience, far from discouraging, will help to uproot all your self-confidence, and to raze to the ground the whole edifice of pride. Nothing marks so much the solid advancement of a soul, as this view of his wretchedness without anxiety and without discouragement.” – Fenelon.

That there is such a connection between a continuance in sin and eternal destruction that though God does resolve to deliver some from a continuance in sin that they may not be destroyed, yet he will deliver none from destruction that continue in sin; so while anyone lies under and abiding power of sin, the threats of destruction and everlasting separation from God are to be held out to him (so Heb. 3:12; to which add Heb. 10:38). This is the rule of God’s proceeding: If any man “depart” from him [Heb. 3:12], “draw back” through unbelief, “God’s soul has no pleasure in him” [Heb. 10:38] – that is, his indignation shall pursue him to destruction” (so evidently Gal. 6:8). – John Owen.

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allowance for this one step, it will take another. It is impossible to fix bounds to sin. It is like water in a channel – if it once breaks out, it will have its course.” – John Owen.

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It is the Spirit alone that can do, that does, this work to this purpose. And this is the first thing that the Spirit does in order to the mortification of any lust whatsoever – it convinces the soul of all the evil of it, cuts off all its pleas, discovers all its deceits, stops all its evasions, answers its pretenses, makes the soul own its abomination and lie down under the sense of it. Unless this be done all that follows is in vain.” – John Owen

One cannot win Christ at the end without faithfully running the course now. – Schriener and Canaday.

Our assurance is not destroyed by the demands for endurance. The key to assurance is not to eliminate the Biblical commands for endurance, but rather to magnify grace as a future power to believe, as well as a past pardon for sin. Our assurance does not lie in looking back to a momentary decision we made for Christ, but in looking forward to the certainty of God’s preserving grace, based on the all-sufficient atonement of his Son’s death.” – John Piper

Assurance that, if you are his child, our endurance in faith and joy is finally and decisively in his hands: Heb 13:21. We must fight, but that fight is what God works in us: Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; 1 Thess. 5:24.

“The only thing that will condemn us at the judgment day is unforgiven sin.” Piper, p. 322.

Self righteousness – Ezek 33:13.

Faith stands or falls on the truth that the future with God is more satisfying than the one promised by sin. When this truth is embraced and God is cherished above all, the power of sin is broken. The power of sin is the power of deceit. Sin has power through promising a false future. In temptation sin comes to us and says: “the future with God on his narrow way is hard and unhappy; but the way I promise is pleasant and satisfying.” The power of sin is in the power of this lie. – John Piper, p. 326.

Why mortification is the work of the Spirit.

1. The Spirit is promised of God to be given unto us to do this work.
2. All mortification is from the gift of Christ
3. How the Spirit mortifies sin
 - a. By causing our hearts to abound in grace and the fruits contrary to the flesh.
 - b. By real physical efficiency on the root and habit of sin.
 - c. By bringing the cross of Christ into the hearts of sinners by faith.

There will be no mortification of any sin unless one be a believer.

There will be no mortification of any sin without sincerity and diligence in a universality of obedience.

Get a clear and abiding sense upon your mind and conscience of the guilty, danger, and evil of your sin.

- Consider the guilt of it.
- Consider the danger of it.
 - Of being hardened by deceitfulness.
 - Of some great temporal correction.
 - Of loss of peace and strength.
 - Of eternal destruction.
- Consider its present evils.
 - It grieves the holy and blessed Spirit.
 - The Lord Jesus Christ is wounded afresh by it.
 - It will take away a man’s usefulness in his generation.

Load your conscience with the guilt of sin.

- Begin with generals and move to particulars.

Constantly long and breathe after deliverance from the power of it.

Consider whether the distemper is rooted in your nature and increased by your constitution.

Consider the occasions and advantages your distemper has taken to exert and put forth itself, and watch against them all.

Rise mightily against the first actings and conceptions of your distemper.

Use and exercise yourself to such meditations as may serve to fill you at all times with self-abasement and thoughts of your own vileness.

- Think much of the excellency of the majesty of God and your infinite, inconceivable distance from him.
- Think much of your unacquaintedness with him.

Do not speak peace to yourself before God speaks it, but hearken to what God says to your soul.

Directions for the work itself.

Set faith at work on Christ for the killing of your sin.

This whole work is effected, carried on, and accomplished by the power of the Spirit, in all the parts and degrees of it.

- The Spirit alone clearly and fully convinces the heart of the evil and guilt and danger of the corruption, lust or sin to be mortified.
- The Spirit alone reveals unto us the fullness of Christ for our relief.
- The Spirit alone establishes the heart in expectation of relief from Christ.
- The Spirit alone brings the cross of Christ into our hearts with its sin-killing power.