00:40 You've probably heard Christians speak about being led by the Spirit; but I wonder if you've ever noticed the verses (they're in **Romans chapter 8**), and I want us to look together at what Paul says there from **verse 12**. "*Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation, but it is not to the sinful nature to live according to it, for if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."* When Paul speaks about being led by the Spirit of God, he isn't speaking about particular guidance in the Christian life....whom one should marry, where one should go to seminary, what church one should belong to. **He is speaking about that general guidance that the Holy Spirit gives to us, in urging us to live lives of holiness**.

01:48 Of course, it's in this context that Paul is speaking about the Spirit as ***the Spirit of Sonship***. And because the Spirit is the Spirit of Sonship, one of the great ministries of the Spirit is to transform our lives so that we begin to bear the family likeness, so that our lives glorify our elder brother, Jesus Christ, and so that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

And here in Romans chapter 8, Paul tells us that part of this leading of the Spirit involves what he describes in **verse 13** as, "*Putting to death the misdeeds of the body in order that we may live. If we live according to the sinful nature, we will die. But if, through the Spirit, we put to death the misdeeds of the body, we will live*." This is what the older Christians used to call mortification, *the mortification of sin.* And Paul is saying that **the Holy Spirit is the great agent in the mortification of sin.**

03:07 Now, we don't use that expression too often today, largely because, often enough, we feel that people will be a little frightened by it. After all, it often conjures up pictures of monks in cells, beating themselves with whips, or people living on tops of poles, trying to isolate themselves from their sin. And often enough in the Christian world in our own day, because we have pushed the idea of the mortification of sin into a medieval world, we have forgotten not only that this is something the apostle Paul says we need to do, but that this is something that our Lord Jesus Christ also has taught us to do. It was after all, not Paul, but Jesus who said, "If your right hand offends you, cut it off. If your right eye leads you into sin, pluck it out. If you want to live the Christian life, you must deny yourself. Take up the cross and follow me." And so we find as much in our Lord Jesus Christ’s teaching, as here in the apostle Paul's teaching, an emphasis on the fact that **if we are to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ, one of the things we need to do, one of the things for which the Holy Spirit has been given to help us to do, is to deal with our sin.**

04:39 One of the most moving experiences I think I've ever had in seminary was this. When through my office door, one day, came a student who sat down beside me and said, "Take me through the steps in God's word that will really help me to deal with my sin." In a sense, that's what I want us to do from this passage in which Paul is giving us this great, but apparently simple exhortation, "***By the Spirit, put sin to death.***"

And I think we'll notice as we look at these words together, that Paul unpacks them in a most remarkable way in the context of this great teaching in Romans chapter 8. Think about what he says. **Think first of all, about *the basic presuppositions* that underlie his statement in verse 13, "That by the Spirit we are to put to death the misdeeds of the body." *What does he presuppose here?***

 1st *PRESUPPOSITION*

05:45 Well, obviously **he presupposes that we *need* to do it**. You need to put sin to death in your life. And the reason we need to do it of course, is because, even although we are already Christians by the power of God's Spirit, not only does Christ live in us by the Spirit, but as Paul had said in chapter 7, **sin *continues* to live in us by (alongside) the Holy Spirit**. And because sin continues to live in us as a lodger, it is vital for us, if you are going to go on with Jesus Christ, to do everything that God's grace will enable us to do to evict that lodger from a life to which he no longer rightly belongs. It's a very important principle for us to realize this, that even although we have been brought into the kingdom of God, even although our lives are transformed, we are not yet everything that God will finally make us. And until that day dawns, we need to keep struggling against sin. **We need to, by God's Spirit, get a stranglehold on sin and put it to death.**

 2nd *PRESUPPOSITION*

07:13 Not only is that the case, but **Paul suggests to us that we are actually *responsible* to do it**. It would be a great mistake in any of our Christian lives if we thought, "Now that I'm a Christian, sin will simply automatically go away." Whenever a young Christian thinks that, they are always in for a terrible tumble when they begin to realize the presence of sin and its powerful workings in their lives. And Paul says here, because that is true, we are responsible to put sin to death. But we might say to ourselves, "But Paul says here, it's by the Spirit that sin is put to death." No, he doesn't. He says, "If ***you***, by the Spirit, put sin to death, then you will live."

08:13 **We are not to play the Spirit off against *our own responsibility***. That is Paul's point, and this, of course, is the teaching of the New Testament in general. All that the Spirit is in our lives to do, he is in our lives to enable us to perform. I suppose the most perfect way Paul puts that is in Philippians chapter 2, when he says to the Philippians, "**Work out your salvation**." Not work up salvation, but work out the salvation God has given to you, into every part of your life, and into the church fellowship, because God is at work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. And you see his logic. He says, "You are to work out your salvation because God's working in your salvation." And here he says, "You are responsible to put sin in your life to death." **And *you* are gloriously able to do it because the *Spirit* is working in your life.**

 3rd *PRESUPPOSITION*

09:22 So there are things that present challenges to us and give hope to us. They present **challenges** to us, because Paul is exhorting us to deal with *sin hidden in our hearts*. And these words present **great hope** to us because they assure us that *by the power of the Spirit, we will be able to it.* Do you remember how earlier on, in Romans chapter 6, he had laid the foundation for that by explaining to these Christians that, **although sin was still *present* in their lives, sin longer had *dominion* in their lives**---it no longer reigned over them. They had died to the dominion of sin through Jesus Christ. Now it was no longer the tyrant king of their lives. Christ was the king of their lives. **And because its dominion was ended, by the power of the Spirit they would be enabled to put sin to death.**

 4th *PRESUPPOSITION*

10:24 But I think there's **another presupposition** smuggled into Paul's statement here, not just that we need to put sin to death, and that we are responsible to put sin to death, and that by the Spirit we will be enabled to put sin to death. I think he rather assumes **that we will *want* to put sin to death**. And there's where ( if I may use an Americanism)…. there's where the rubber meets the road. There's where Paul scratches where we itch. **There is the *key* issue**. The resources are available to us in Jesus Christ. Paul has made this very plain and he assumes that we will want to put sin to death, but do we? That's the point. Do we?

11:21 Turn, with me, from Paul's basic presuppositions to what we might call **Paul's essential motivations.** There are many motivations given to us in the New Testament to encourage us to wrestle with and to deal with sin remaining in our hearts, but it's interesting to see how in this very passage, **Paul seems to gather together a number of vital (perhaps one might say, the most important) *motivations for putting sin to death***. Let me draw your attention to them.

1st *MOTIVATION*

**The *first* is here in verse 13**. It's this: **we will reap what we sow**. "*If you live to the flesh*," he says, *"From the flesh, you will reap death. If you live to the Spirit, from the Spirit, you will reap life."* You remember the principle? Maybe you were taught this when you were a child, "You sow a thought; you reap an action. You sow an action; you reap a character. You sow a character; you reap a destiny." And there is a principle in the kingdom of God. It is that, "Whatever you sow, you will most certainly reap." You will get in the kingdom of God what you really want. Paul is urging us here (in this little insight he gives us), **he is urging us here to take the *long term view* in our struggle against sin.**

13:00 Isn't it true in your life, as it is in mine, that when we are engaged in conflict with sinful tendencies and desires in our hearts, the one thing that will make us definitely fall prey to them, is when whatever it is that tempts us comes so close to us, that we are no longer able to see the glory of God, to which we have been called, and the temptation of the moment seems so large to us, that it's able to blot out the glorious destiny and the multitude of privileges Jesus Christ has brought to us. And that's why Paul is saying, "**You must learn to look towards the harvest day. You must learn to look, always towards the final destiny**." It will save you in many trials and temptations.

 2nd *MOTIVATION*

14:00 **But there's a *second* motivation**, and it's written into the whole context of Paul's writing here. Why should I put sin to death? Well, because my eyes are fixed upon the final harvest. But yes, because in the second place, **I remember that I'm a member of the family of God**. You notice how Paul puts it in verse 14? "Those who are thus led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." And then in verse 12, "Therefore, brothers..."; and actually, Paul doesn't, all that often, appeal to these congregations to whom he writes, by this passionate term "brothers", unless it's something really that's burdening his heart. "*Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation*." That is, we have a family obligation because we are the children of the living God. **There is an obligation placed on us to live as children of the living God.**

15:05 You know, when children grow up, you sit down with them. You say to them around the table, "We don't live that way in our family, we live this way in our family." And it becomes a matter of vital importance to them, as they grow up, that they bring honor to the family to which they belong. What an encouragement this is to us. When we remember who we are, when we are under pressure to fall into sin, when we are tempted by others or by our own fleshly carnal lust, to say, as you remember, Joseph said when he was tempted, "Who am I that I should do such a thing." I am a child of God. I am a son….a daughter… of a heavenly Father, a Holy Father. I will say, no, no, no!

 *3rd MOTIVATION*

16:01 But then, do you notice how Paul had laid the foundation of a ***third* motivation** right at the beginning of this passage, when he explained to these Roman Christians that Christ had died for sin. "*What the law could not do because it was weak through my flesh, God did; sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for my sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirements of the law might be fulfilled in me; walking, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."* What's he talking about there? He is saying, "**As I look at my sin and as I look at my temptation, one of the things that grips my mind is this thought, Jesus Christ died on the cross for this**. I will have no part of it."

And he, as it were, taking us in our holy imagination to Calvary and saying, "Listen, Christian, for a moment to Jesus cry on the cross, 'My God, I'm forsaken. Why?'" *That* sin is the answer. That's why he was forsaken. You see the motive that this gives to the Christian? **There is a reason for me to refuse to fall into sin. There is a reason for me to live a holy life because my savior has died to save me from it.**

4th *MOTIVATION*

17:39 **But there's *another* motivation written in here**, and perhaps it's the most striking of all, in verses 9-11. He says, "*You are not controlled by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he doesn't belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness*." Yes, we reap what we sow and we recognize our obligations as members of the family of God. And oh yes, we also remember that Christ died for our sin, but **we remember too that Jesus Christ lives in us by his Holy Spirit in the most *intimate communion*.**

Do you know that passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 which is so painful, in a sense? It's almost unreadable in public. It’s where Paul uses this principle. He says, "When you fall into sin in this way, you can't leave Jesus Christ outside the door, and say to the Lord, Jesus, 'Jesus, I'm about to fall and yield to temptation. So, for the moment, you had better stay here and I'll go inside; and, while I'm inside with my sin, you can just stay out here.’" "No!" Says Paul.

19”11 **Christians are so united to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, that whenever they sin, they are dragging Jesus into their sin**. They are saying to Jesus, "Jesus, you have united me to yourself. So come with me into my sin." And, you see, when the Spirit reveals to us (as Jesus said he would in John chapter 14) that Christ is in us and we are in him, we have the strongest of all possible motivations for saying, "No." to sin, and for strangling the first risings of sin and lust in our lives, because by the Spirit we belong to Jesus. So Paul brings certain presuppositions to this statement. He provides us with certain motivations for putting sin to death. And then briefly, well, you'll notice the method that he seems to commend that will help us, by the Spirit to put sin to death.

1st *PRINCIPLE*

20:24 **Let me give you a series of principles briefly that you may work out into your life.** The ***first*** of them is this: If you are to be successful in dealing with sin in your life by the Spirit, **you must first of all, commit yourself to universal holiness**. That is to say, you must say to Christ by the Spirit, "Let there be no part of my life---let there be no area of my life---in which I do not give you full control." It's not simply a matter of disguising sin, or diverting sin from one place to another. **It's a matter of absolute control given to Christ**.

 2nd *PRINCIPLE*

21:11 The ***second* principle** is this: **We must learn to guard our minds from dwelling on sin**. You notice how Paul speaks about this in verse 5, and again in verse 6, and again in verse 7, "*The man who lives to the* ***Spirit*** *has his mind set on the things of the* ***Spirit****. The man who lives to the* ***flesh*** *has his mind dwelling on the things of the* ***flesh****.*"

 3rd *PRINCIPLE*

21:40 The ***third* principle** is this: **Fill your mind with the things of the Spirit**. You notice how he puts it in verse 5: we have to fill our minds with the things that belong to what the Spirit desires.

 4th *PRINCIPLE*

21:56 The ***fourth* principle** is this: **We have to recognize that this is not something that we do on our own.** Like most of the verbs in the New Testament letters, the verb is in the plural. And there will be times in our Christian lives when we will need to go to our fellow Christian and say to that fellow Christian, "I need to confess my sins to you and ask you to pray with me, that we will find grace."

 LAST *PRINCIPLE*

And I suppose the ***final* principle** is this: **Start doing it *now***. This shows us our weakness, and in our next study, we will see the wonderful promise that's given to us in Scripture, that the Spirit helps us in our weakness.