SUPERnatural: Mortified Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 3:18

May 5th, 2024 Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:13-19

**SLIDE 1: TITLE**

Today we continue to talk through what the life of a Holy Spiritian looks like. And if you are wondering what a Holy Spiritan is, it’s a new phrase we are trying to coin. If a Christian is someone who follows Christ, a Holy Spiritan is someone filled with the Spirit and empowered to follow Christ. We have seen how the Holy Spirit dwells within us. As the Spirit of adoption, he makes us into sons and daughters of God, and last week, we discovered how we can depend upon the Holy Spirit to give us the words to say. We are enabled to speak up.

 In all of these effects, we rightly say that we are “empowered by the Holy Spirit. We cannot accomplish these effects on our own. They are supernatural, meaning they derive from beyond myself, beyond this physical realm that we can touch and see and feel. It’s no surprise that the nature of the Holy Spirt is spiritual, but thankfully, he does make his presence known in our concrete everyday lives. This makes the person and work of the Spirit all the more mysterious to us; but such is the life of a Holy Spiritain: we embrace that mystery… it’s further up and further in as we discover more and more the ways the Holy Spirit empowers believers.

**SLIDE 2: Mortification**

 So, for the moment, we are going to talk about a fancy word: Mortification. Have you ever been mortified? Maybe it was that time you were innocently shopping at the store when your toddler decides to have a full-blown meltdown in the middle of the aisle. You have moment of panic as you glace around to see who notices. The answer of course if everybody. Then a stroke of genius. You clear your throat and ask loudly, “Whose kid is that?” And head into the next aisle. Or maybe it was that time you had a prominent piece of food stuck to the side of your face as you head into the important meeting. About halfway through, after an innocent scratch on the chin, you discover said food and after cringing, you wonder why no one said anything. Or maybe it was that time during a family member’s birthday party. You had the cake all prepared and lit up with candles. The birthday song had begun out on the patio and as you take the cake out to the gathering you forgot about that one step on the threshold of the doorway. That party is still referred to as the “Great Frosting Explosion.”

 We use the word mortified to indicate extreme embarrassment. But “mort” in Latin means to kill or put to death. So in our modern usage, to be mortified is to be embarrassed to death, or to be so embarrassed that you would want to die.

**SLIDE 3: Mortification: to be embarrassed to death, or to be so embarrassed that you would want to die**

Have you been there? I am sure we all have our own stories of experiencing such embarrassment. But to be mortified in a biblical sense, carries a much different meaning.

 When we turn to Colossians 3:5 Paul says, If you are a Christian, someone who has been raised with Christ, “put to death the parts of your life that belong to the earth.”

**SLIDE 4: “put to death the parts of your life that belong to the earth.” Colossians 3:5**

Some older translations use the term “Mortify the deeds of your members.” The members of your body are your limbs and the actions of our limbs can be pretty good at getting us into trouble. So we are to put to death these areas of our lives. And Paul goes on to list some of our desires of the flesh. He includes sexual immorality, moral corruption, lust, evil desire, and greed, which he equates to idolatry. Put these parts of your life to death. I can guarantee you, that if we do not mortify these desires now, we will be modified by them later.

**SLIDE: if we do not mortify these desires now, we will be modified by them later.**

When our spouse finds out about those websites you’ve been frequenting, or our loved ones discover the things we have done in the dark – what we thought was secret. We know full well that there are no secrets with God, so I say again, if we do not mortify these desires now, we will be mortified by them later. Paul indicates in verse 6 that the wrath of God is coming upon disobedient people because of these things, because of these desires, because we have not put them to death. The wrath of God is not something to dismiss or take lightly. This is much more than an embarrassing circumstance or something that is hard to live down. We are talking about holiness here…

 Paul continues: “You used to live this way, when you were alive to these things. But now set aside these things, or put off also; anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene language. Don’t lie to each other. Take off the old human nature with its practices and put on the new nature, which is renewed in knowledge by conforming to the image of the one who created it.”

 Basically, Paul join in with Peter, who we read earlier as he reiterates the Old Testament call that has stood since the beginning of time when God says: “Be holy as I am holy!”

**SLIDE: “Be Holy as I am Holy”**

We are to conform to his image, his ways, his purity. The problem is we are stuck in these bodies of fleshly desire that want to act out, that want to fly off the handle, that wants to hurt others and gratify ourselves. We want to satisfy our own appetites. The solution: Put to death the old and put on the new. Simple, straight forward…makes sense. But how do we get there? It’s like we have the answer key to the math test, but we have no idea the steps needed to get to the answer.

 Well, thankfully we are not in this process alone. We are Holy Spiritans and part of his role in our lives is to sanctify God’s people. He will help us in this battle against the old…he will help us in our efforts to put on the new. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can mortify our flesh.

 But, we are not robots. And the Holy Spirit is not a robot repairman. He does not come around to install a new program or replace an old chip. He is not there to do the repairs and send us on our way until we eventually malfunction again. But what does the Bible say? Our memory verse from a few weeks ago: 1 Corinthains 3:16, “Don’t you know that you are God’s temple and God’s Spirit lives in you?” I know you know this verse but lets try to hear it as through it was the first time. “You are God’s temple and God’s Spirit lives in you.” What a wonderful and glorious and terrifying truth! Is that how I see myself when I wake up in the morning? As God’s temple? Is that how I see myself when I interact with others? Is that how I see myself when I am alone? Watching TV? Eating food? Driving my car? Scrolling on my phone? I am not a robot that needs repair….I am a temple that needs to be sanctified.

**SLIDE: I am not a robot that needs repair….I am a temple that needs to be sanctified.**

Verse 17: “If someone destroys God’s temple”, that could refer to myself or someone else, but it says God will destroy that person. That seems harsh…a little over the line God. What about forgiveness? Why would God do something so extreme? Look at the next part, because God’s temple is holy, which is what you are. The temple of the living God is a dangerous place because he is holy! And we do not want to mess with the holiness of God. There are consequences to desecrating the holy place of God. And so we put off the old desires and put on the new. That’s the answer, but as I said, we may have the answers to the math teat, but in this process of learning, we need to show our work.

**SLIDE: In the process of learning, we need to show our work.**

I always hated that phrase. Why couldn’t the answer itself just be good enough? But showing your work does a few things, and we are going to continue our tour of Paul’s writings to discover three reasons why we need to show our work and why we need to be intimately involved in this process of learning how to put off the old and put on the new. And each of these reasons will come with a short prayer prompt that will allow us to stay in conversation with the Holy Sprit who teaches us. Think of it as the struggling student who stays after school to get help from a tutor. This is the Holy Spirit’s job. He is out tudor in this process.

So the first reason to show your work is that it allows you to look back and check for mistakes. If I arrive at the wrong answer, and can go back through my steps and see where I went wrong. I have an account of my thought process. So my work allows me to pinpoint my mistake. Take a look at 2 Corinthians 3:18 where Paul lets us know that “We are being transformed into the image of God’s glory from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

**SLIDE 9: “We are being transformed into the image of God’s glory from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18**

So our process of mortification is an incremental one, to happen by degrees, by steps. So showing our work means paying attention to those degrees. Can I look back on the past year and see some of the steps I have taken. Can I look back and note where I may have gone wrong, where I made a misstep? Taking the time to think through our previous steps allows us to really see how far the Holy Sprit has brought us! Or maybe we see that we have not made much progress…but a least now we can ask why that might be. “Looking at the work I have done, why is my progress stalled? Why do I seem to still persist in this ungodly desire that I struggle with? Holy Spirit show me where I have gone wrong! Take me to the next degree of glory.” That is a good prayer right there.

Two, we show our work because it demonstrates understanding and comprehension. The point of learning is not only to get the right answer, the point is to know how to get the right answer; to be equipped to tackle the same problem down the road. A robot doesn’t learn, it processes the data that is given to it. A temple, on the other hand, must learn from experience what it means to honor the Lord and treat him as holy. Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13 when he asks, “Who has known the mind of the Lord, who will advise him?” The implied answer is no one, no one is in any position to advise God…but then Paul gets to his point. In 1 Corinthains 2:16 he says, “But we have the mind of Christ.”

**SLIDE 10: “But we have the mind of Christ.” 1 Corinthains 2:16**

We are being taught by the Holy Spirit the things of God, things we could not have understood or accepted before. But as we show our work and comprehend more and more, we find that we can live and move and have our being with the mind of Christ. We can think him and act like him and make decisions as he would. And the best part of this is to know that if we do not function with the mind of Christ at the moment, if that seems an impossible reality, know that you can learn! We pray, “Holy Spirit, teach me what it means to live with the mind of Christ!”

**SLIDE 11: “Holy Spirit, teach me what it means to live with the mind of Christ!”**

Three, showing your work shows effort and interest. It demonstrates a desire to live and serve as Christ did. Every single time I help my kids with homework, I annoy them because I am constantly telling to write neatly! I have said, “Your handwriting tells me you do not care about this assignment. In fact, it’s outright disrespectful to your teacher to turn in a mess like this and it undercuts your entire educational process if you think this type of work is acceptable.” Well, I could go on… The point is, if we are actually interested in progressing and in learning, then we would accept that fact that we need to show the work and do it in a legible manner, in a respectful way. There is little point in trying to teach someone a new concept when they do not care to learn. And the Holy Spirit knows this! As humans, as temples, we need to, at the very least, show an interest! Too often we are a bit muddled and waffling. Our prayers can have a conflicted tone to them: “Holy Spirit, I want more of you. I want to live in conformity to Christ. I want to mortify my flesh and it’s desires….or….I don’t.” I either want to or I don’t, so which is it? Paul puts it this way in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, “Don’t suppress the Spirit.”

**SLIDE 12: “Don’t suppress the Spirit.” 1 Thessalonians 5:19**

 The Greek word there means quench or extinguish. He says, “Do not brush off Sprit-inspired messages.” Again the Greek there is do not despise, or do not ignore the things the Spirit is teaching you. He continues, “But examine everything carefully and hang on to what is good. Avoid every kind of evil. Now may the God of peace himself cause you to be completely dedicated to him…” That is the outcome we are looking for! So we pray, “Holy Spirit, give me the heart of a student. I want to learn from you. I want to be completely dedicated.”

**SLIDE 13: “Holy Spirit, give me the heart of a student. I want to learn from you. I want to be completely dedicated.”**

And so we conclude that our sanctification, this process of mortifying the deeds of our flesh is not something we accomplish, but it is a result of our relationship with God. And because it is a result of our relationship with God, it demands our investment and effort and willingness. We show our work so that we can look back and see previous missteps, so that we can understand new lessons learned and so that we can demonstrate to the Sprit himself that we are interested in learning more. “Teach us Holy Spirit; take us from glory to glory, give us the mind of Christ so that we can live as temples completely dedicated to you. Amen!”