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## **Killing Sin by the Spirit**

Romans 8:13

by Tim Conway

Roman chapter 8, specifically verse 13. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die...” Now, I think it needs to be said right here that it is absolutely essential and I say this based on our Sunday school today. It is absolutely essential that we understand that when Paul speaks in Romans 8 about living according to the flesh or setting the mind on the things of the flesh he is not saying, he is not speaking about simply the fact we live in these bodies. There are places in the bible that refer to mankind, that flesh refers to the body, but not here. And I think you can see that very plainly because it says “If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.” I mean it’s pretty plain it’s not speaking about the body cause folks we all live in the body and if the way to get to life is to not be in the body then you’ve got problems cause we’re all in that body, and there’s just simply not a way to live in this world outside of this body. Cause once you’re detached from this body folks it’s all over. The flesh he’s talking about here is another animal.

So, let’s do a quick review of Romans 8.13. We’ve already spent two messages on this. One, looking at the first part. The second message looking at the second part. But let’s just for a quick review say think about this... some of you are visiting and some of you just by way of remembrance... this is a life and death verse. I mean you may have read that there right now as we went through it but I really want to call that to your attention. It is a life and death verse. There’s no way out either for you or me. You’re caught in the current of this verse. One way or the other you’re life pulses in these words. There’s a way of life in this verse and there’s a way of death. And remember this; God is no respecter of persons. That is so important to say because we are. We give greater respect to ourselves. We think that some how the rules going to get bent for us because we’re partial to us. Right? That is so naturally ingrained in us. So it’s so important to say that. Now look, God looks at us and He puts us on the scale, what shows us there, I mean what the truth is, what the truth says is basically how God’s going to measure this whole

deal. He's not going to bend the rule for us. There's not going to be a curve. We like curves, but there's no promise of that here. If you meet the condition for death, then death you will have. If you meet the condition for life, then life you will have.

So here it is. Here it is. If you love death, you like the thought of coming face to face with the fury of an angry God; if you hate your own good and despise eternal joy I have a solution for you... just live according to the flesh. That my friend is all you have to do to destroy yourself. Now, here's the thing. Most people will not admit to living according to the flesh. Yeah, most people are living according to the flesh. You say, "Now how can you make that judgment?" I can make it because Jesus makes it... "Few there be that find it." Few there be that find life. That means most find death. That means most are living according to the flesh. That's a reality, but you know what? Most won't admit it because most don't know it. They don't admit it because they really don't understand it, but come on folks, most of you in this place do understand it. What is the essential element of living according to the flesh? Remember Romans 8:7. What is it? They don't submit to God's law. You boil it down. The flesh. Now think about this. Paul is using the flesh, not to refer to the body. He is using flesh to basically describe the rebellious, unsubmitive, defiant nature. Adamic nature of man. That's it. And I emphasize rebellious. I emphasize unsubmitive. I emphasize defiant because that's what you are when you don't submit to the law of God and that's what you are when you walk according to the flesh. Think about this. Think about what this means. To reject God's law is to reject God's will, and that is to reject God Himself. If you set yourself against my will, you set yourself against me. You set yourself against God's will you set yourself against Him. That's what this is all about and I think this is so absolutely critical to keep emphasizing this. Over and over. This is not just simply screaming in a rage against God. This isn't just out of disgust about what God wants you to do tearing the pages out of your bible, throwing them on the ground and stomping on them or raising up your fist in the air and shaking it in God's face. This just means you ignore what God wants. That's living according to the flesh and it smells of death. John 3:36, "Whoever (listen to this carefully...) Whoever (no exceptions) Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life." The Son of God is not silent. He expects many things from you. And He says so. Just go about your life like it doesn't matter that Jesus has spoken to you. Just neglect, just

disregard the Son of God. That's exactly what you want to do if you love death and cherish damnation. That's exactly what living according to the flesh is all about. Now listen. Jesus said this, "Truly, truly I say to you. If anyone keeps my word he will never see death." So if you want to see death don't keep His word. It's that simple. When Christ speaks just say "I don't think so. I wanna do something different. I'm going to do something else." That's all there is to it, folks. Listen to how David puts it in the psalms, "Kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish in the way." Let me ask you this. When a prince puts out his hand and you take it and kiss it what are you saying by such a jester? What is kissing the Son all about? A kiss is an expression. Does it not express love? And loyalty? And submission? To kiss the Son is to show you're allegiance, devotion, and fidelity to the Son.

Folks, are you all really grasping this? This is something we've got to get a handle on. The will of God matters. The will of the Son matters. It matters more than any other thing. Kissing the Son is all about this. It's respecting, and reverencing, and honoring, and prizing the will of the Son and this is the only path of life. It is surrender, it is submission, resignation, yielding. Now, come on! Think about it! Look at yourselves! Look at your lives! Is everything on the table? Owen talked about repentance in the Sunday school hour. Have you guys thrown it all on the table? Are you holding back? Do you have reservations? Have you really laid everything out there? I mean, everything! Jesus said this, Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me Lord, lord and do not do the things I tell you." And what does He tell you? What is His will? I'll tell you exactly what His will is for you. It is to stop living contrary to His will. That's His will for you. It is to stop living according to the contrary nature of the flesh and to start putting to death all the things that He hates. That's what it's all about, nothing held back. Folks, that is the only way that leads to life.

Now, think about this, think about what Romans 8:13 is saying, the second part, I must put to death the deeds of the body in order to have life. Think about what this is. It's killing in my body what Christ hates. It is kissing the Son with the full allegiance of my body. Listen! You guys, many of you probably know Romans 12:1 right off. Let me tell you what Romans 12:1 does not say. It does not say to present yourself as a living sacrifice to God, all though we do need to do that, we do need to offer our whole self

Paul doesn't say that. He specifically makes the appeal to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Now listen. So often we think about our bodies in a wrong way. So often we do not think about our bodies when it comes to the lordship of Christ. Now this is so important to get into our heads. When we talk about flesh we don't mean our bodies in the sense of Romans 8:13, that is not it. We are talking about that rebellious nature. We're not talking about the body because if you think that you're going to end up with wrong theology in the end. Something else is being said there. You know what? Brother Charles helped remind me yesterday about these realities. That my facial expressions, making eye contact, tones of voice, body language, gestures, with all these things we need to kiss the Son. Paul, listen, Paul makes this statement to the Philippians concerning his body and I think it just sheds so much light on this. I think the reason it sheds light on this is because you've probably read it but even though you've read it and are familiar with it you don't speak this way. You don't speak this way because I don't think you think this way. Listen to what he says, "It is my eager expectation and hope that as always Christ will be honored in my body whether it be by life or by death." Now listen. Plato and others believed that the body is inherently evil. And you know what? I think by and large as Christians we tend to hold to that concept and because we do when's the last time you talked that way to another Christian? When's the last time you told another Christian, "Welp, I hope to honor God in my body." You don't talk that way. Now, you might say "I hope to honor God", but a lot of times you have this thinking "...with my thoughts, on the inside, after all the heart it's the central..." But you don't talk that way about the body. Why? Because maybe our thinking isn't quit in line with the word of God.

And maybe we need to work on trying to get it there. Maybe we've misread our bibles a little bit. Think about this. 1 Corinthians 6:20 "Glorify God in your body." Wow Paul. That's important to you. Yep. Now look, here's the thing that we need to remember. This body that we live in Christians is not an object of destruction. God is never going to destroy this body. This is not an object of destruction it is an object of transformation. Listen to what's said in Philippians chapter 3, verse 20 "Our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly boy to e like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to

Himself.” He does not destroy the body. He recreates it using this as the material from which it’s recreated. So listen. He wants the stuff that He uses to create the new body to be pure, and to be good, and to be blameless, and to be wholesome. He does. It may be a lowly body but He expects it to be a pure and holy body. Listen to this. 1 Thessalonians 4:3, “This is the will of God, that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor.” Or there’s this one 1 Thessalonians 5:23 May your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” You know what Paul expects here? That Christians will seek to have a body that is blameless, that is honorable, that is holy when Christ comes or they die. That’s a reality. I know sin tries to reign in your mortal bodies. I know it can be really difficult to resist sin as it tries to reign in those mortal bodies. But brethren, answer me this. Answer me this one question. In all these verses I just read does Paul ever assume that because it’s difficult we are excused with presenting Christ with anything less than a body that is kept blameless and holy? You simply cannot come to the place where you say “I can’t.” you cannot come to that place. Paul assumes it, he expects it, he wants it, he believes that it will be a reality. No where in these verses does he make allowance for you to be a wretched man, persistently failing in this body. No sir. The old flesh may be connected with this body it may be. But it is not to control you and it is not to control your bodies and you are to put to death the desires. You know Brother Charles he read that Galatians 5:24, “...the flesh is crucified with its desires and its passions.” That is the life that needs to be preeminently characteristic of us. I know the flesh is there. I know it has roots that go down deep within us, inside us. I know that tearing them up requires tearing up what we are. Part of us dies every time we tear these things up. They’re connected to us; it hurts us when we tear them out. And folks I’ve already said this in a prior sermon. This is not for the timid and weak, but Christ does not save us to be timid and weak. He saves us to be conquerors. He saves us to declare war on sin and to have victory over it. He saves us to declare war on the devil and shortly God will, under our very heels, crush his neck. He has saved us to be that. This maybe hard. It’s not for cowards, its’ not for quitters. The kingdom of Heaven is taken by force and mark this well. It will take everything you have and more. I say more because you will need strength above and beyond your own.

Up until now we've paid very little attention to three of the most immensely important words found in Romans 8:13. Can you think of what they might be? "...By the Spirit..." Okay. I need to ask you a question. How puts to death the deeds of the body? No, no, no, no, no. Read Romans 8:13, what does it say? You put to death the deeds of the body. That is critical. See we can fall into one of two very, and I say this deadly mistakes right at this point. Romans 8:13 you put to death the deeds of the body. You do it. This does not say the Spirit does it, it says you do it. Don't ever confuse that. Don't ever mix that up in your minds. Some people carry around this mistaken idea that the key to holiness is to simply let go and let God. You've heard that kind of thinking. They have a very confused and unbiblical mindset that says "Well, if God doesn't do it. If God doesn't change me far be it from me to do anything. Poor pathetic me, there's just nothing I can do." You know, and I really think this is true, I think when some people say they want revival what they really mean is they want the Spirit to come and do for them what God told them to do. I really think that's behind some of it. Now, there are good reasons to want revival, but I'm afraid that that's sometimes the case. My response to all this is basically this. Get up off your hyper Calvinistic rear end and put to death the deeds of the body. Start killing what Jesus hates. But, and here's where the other error can creep in, don't do it in your own strength. This is where those three very important words come in. Do it by the Spirit. Now that's just as critical cause we don't wanna fall off the wagon on the other side either where we talk about cleaning up our lives, getting our lives right. We ignore the essential necessity of that Spirit's power. You know, we have multitudes; maybe some of you are in this room right now that go to AA, alcoholics anonymous, they go to NA, narcotics anonymous. They go to some of these rehab programs and there is just dismal failure. I mean statistically folks these programs don't work. They don't. That shouldn't surprise us. Why? Because they're trying to put to death without the Spirit what God's word says can only be put to death by the Spirit. Some of these programs, and listen; this is what these programs basically do. They substitute the Spirit of God for something else. You know what it usually is? Rules; these stipulations, they try to give them basic guidelines. You can not legislate holiness; never, never. Laws and rules and traditions never usher in righteousness because by them themselves they never change men's hearts. What you end up with is legalism; that really is the heart of legalism:

seeking to put rules in the place of the Spirit of God. Now think about this, the Spirit is not a tool or a weapon or a piece of machinery, the Spirit is a person. He is God. So we must put to death the deeds of the body by means of God the Spirit. *You* must do it! But *you* must do it in a way that He does it. Holiness and blamelessness of body is achieved neither by your own unaided efforts nor by the Spirit apart from your effort. Did you all catch that? Maybe I need to say it in a different way? If I achieve a state of blamelessness with my body, it is not achieved all by myself but neither is it achieved apart from myself. If I don't do it the Spirit is not going to do it for me. The Spirit does it as I do it, through me. That is so critical.

So, here's the question: How do I do that? Its one thing for me to say it; how do I do it? How do I put sin to death? How do I actually do it and yet at the same time do it in a way that the Spirit of God does it. I mean where do I go? What do I do? Where can I look? How can I tap into the Spirit's resources? How is this power channeled to me? Is there just this switch I can go over and throw and all of a sudden bang its funneled through me? This person is none other than God himself and Paul just kind of throws this verse out, "By the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body" and I don't know how it is with you but I say "Paul is that all you're going to say?! You're not going to explain that? You're not going to know what that means." How can Paul just say "by the Spirit" and leave it at that? "Come on Paul give us some help?" This has to be one the most difficult aspects of the entire Christian life, just figuring out how to walk in the Spirit, how to live in the Spirit, putting to death sin by the Spirit, us doing it, but all the time tapping into the resources of another. How can I pull spiritual power from God himself? How can I position myself right where the Spirits energy will come to me? Am I the only one who wonders such things? Now listen to me, I can't think of any more important verse or verses in all of the bible that begin to help us answer this than Galatians chapter 3. And I need you all to turn there, Galatians chapter 3. You're in Romans now, go past first and second Corinthians, you come to the book of Galatians. Galatians chapter 3, I will begin reading in verse 2. Now listen, Paul is asking the Galatians a question here, one he knows the answer to but he is trying to stir them to think. "Let me ask you only this did you receive the Spirit...?" That's critical right there. Right there, look at what he's doing. He's talking to them about how they receive the Spirit. "Did you receive the Spirit by works of

the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish having begun by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain? If indeed it was in vain? 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?" Let me ask you this question, how do these verses say that we tap into the miracle working power of the Spirit? Faith. Now how do you suppose the miraculous sin-killing dynamic of the Spirit is engaged? How is it that the Spirit comes into a state of energetic, vigorous, help to us in putting to death the deeds of the flesh, with supernatural even miraculous displays of the power of God? Paul gives you two options, by works of the law or by hearing with faith. Most of you, you said the answer you know the answer that he's looking for. If you're in any doubt whatsoever look down at verses thirteen and fourteen. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it was written, 'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree' so that Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

So, faith is the key. But now watch this: it's not faith in the Spirit. The Spirit is the Helper, but it's not faith in Him. In Galatians 2:16, you're right there, you can glance at this. This faith is not called faith in the Holy Spirit; it is called faith in Jesus Christ. In Galatians 2:20 it is faith in the Son of God. Here, folks, here is one of the most foundational principles in all the Christian life; I do not believe there is a greater truth for living the Christian life than this one. By the Spirit you must kill sin but the way to receive the powerful supply of the Spirit is never to look to the Spirit! It is to look to Christ in faith. Now, you think about this. Never in the New Testament, never are you told to trust the Spirit or put your faith in the Spirit! Never! The faith that unleashes the flood of miraculous sin-killing grace from the Spirit of God is a faith that grips and clings to the promises in Christ.

So let's say you know you need to put to death some unrighteous gossip with your tongue. I mean, that's a deed of the body you need to put to death, right, tongue is a member of this body. You have a problem using it to speak in a way that you shouldn't. You know that you must do it by the Spirit. You're a Christian, I am assuming that because listen Romans 8 we found out, we know this, if you don't have the Spirit you are none of His. You don't even belong to Christ. You have to belong to Christ. We looked at



that, you need to be a Christian to possess that Spirit. It says you receive that Spirit by faith. We receive it, but that's not all we did by faith. It says also that unleashing of the miraculous power. That it takes a miraculous power of God to uproot sin in your life. I'll guarantee you that. This is no common work folks. It is of miraculous nature. It takes supernatural power and when we saw verse 5, Galatians 3 that that comes from faith. You get the Spirit by faith, you unleash that power by faith. So you know this. I'm struggling with gossip. I know that if I'm going to put this thing to death it's got to be by the Spirit or I'll never be able to do it all. You know it's by faith that the Spirit works a sin killing miracle. You know that the Spirit never bids us look to Him, but always look to Christ. So what do you want to do? I'll tell you exactly what you want to do. You want to take a text like this, like Titus 2.13 and 14, "Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ gave Himself...", there's the cross folks. Why? Lord why did you give Yourself? "...To purify for Himself a people for His own possession." Folks, you look to that cross and you say "I know! He gave Himself to purify me! Because He's looking for a people for His own possession that are pure." I look at that and I trust that. The cross is there for me and now I'm going to do this. And I do it, I do it. The Spirit doesn't do it, but see it's as I look to that cross and I trust that promise and I say "Because Christ has said that I'm doing it!" And I do it." But it's, and you know what? If you say you have faith, but you don't do it what do you prove? You prove you don't really have faith. Because what faith says is "He said it, I believe it, and I'm doing it." And it's as we go about life like that that we're going to find that the power of God is actually unleashed into our lives to allow us to carry this thing out. You believe that truth and you kill that sin. And through that faith, and through that faith I should say, we witness a God-given ability to actually put these things to death.

Now listen to me. There are more like this. You say "Well I've got this problem. I got this thing that I'm struggling with." I'll tell you what unleashes the power. There are numbers of texts like this. Think about this; the Lord Jesus Christ, Galatians 1:4 gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age." You see, those things out there in this present evil age, Jesus Christ gave Himself. There's the cross again. Why? To free you from those things. You know all the things Charles brought up here that the gentiles do? There the ones that out there living in this age. Jesus Christ gave Himself to

free you from that. You know, we so often have this misguided notion that Jesus Christ simply gave Himself to give us a clear record in heaven. Oh that's true and that is so important that we're justified, but that is not all the cross is about. Jesus Christ was called Jesus because He would save His people from their sin. There is a reality folks that He saves you from the sin that beset you, entangled you, enslaved you. That's what Romans 6 is all about. You've been set free! The cross did that! You can go back there and hit these truths. Listen to 1 John 3:5, "You know that He appeared to take away sins." You say, "Well that means He washed my record..." That's not what that means. All you have to do is go to 1 John 3 and look at the context. It clearly is a context of the removal of actual sin in your life. That's exactly what that means. That is not a justification text folks. That is a text that says Jesus Christ has it in His mind, in His work, and in His person to set you free from actual sin. You need to trust that and as you put your faith there right in the person and work of Jesus Christ that's where the Spirit of God unleashes.

Listen. Have you guys ever heard this reality? John 16:14, Jesus said this about the Spirit, "He will glorify Me." Now listen. If you go along through life looking to the Spirit for help and the Spirit helps you, and you get deliverance from the sin, who's glorified? The Spirit. The Spirit will not and is not in the business of sanctifying your life apart from you looking to the cross. He wants your eyes on Christ. He is going to glorify Christ. And if you have any doubts about that remember 2 Corinthians 3:18. That text, "We all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another for it comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Who is doing the transforming work in that text? He says "...This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." But are they looking at the Spirit? What are they beholding? The glory of the Lord. That is, I say this again; this is probably the most important reality of the Christian life. That your holiness, your blamelessness, your purity is wrapped up in that cross. Setting your eyes there. Seeing Him in the word, praying to Him, trusting His promises. Delighting in what's He's done for you on the cross. Meditating on His person and His work. Saturating your life with Him. This is the path folks that unleashes the miraculous sin killing power of the Spirit. It's here. So you think about this. Romans 8:13, "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live..." If that's

true and to do it by the Spirit is to do it by faith I'll tell you this. Those who put their confidence in the Lord will never be ashamed.

I just wrap up today with this. I'm going to ask you some questions. Who puts to death the deeds of the body? You put to death the deeds of the body. I just quoted scripture there. That wasn't my answer. That's God's answer. What has God given to the Christian to guarantee his success? By the Spirit, right? Again, right out of the text. Can a Christian ever complain about insufficient power or ability? Freddy nods yes. Freddy let the next question be just for you. Is there any insufficiency of power or ability with the Spirit? So do we lack what we need to put to death sin, the deeds of the flesh? This is another question I have for you; Did God say that He gave us all things that pertain to godliness? Again, that's scripture folks. He did. Peter tells us very specifically that that's a reality. Do we need revival to overcome sin? Or do we just need to do what Romans 8:13 says? I mean isn't that what Paul assumes would be done? Put it to death! He didn't say wait for revival. He said by the Spirit put it to death! Now I'm not going to argue that fact that season of revival would be great and glorious and needful and helpful. But what I want you to realize is God has equipped you Christian. You cannot as a Christian, as a child of God look at this second part of Romans 8:13 and conclude anything else than that the inspired apostle expected you would do this. Not wait for something greater. He's assuming you have what you need now to do it. So, if you complain that you are a defeated Christian, helpless and powerless to do anything about your sin what are you really saying? I mean what are you really saying? What you're doing is you're really calling in to question the resources God has given to you. Yeah, you call into question the very promise. I'll tell you what you do folks. You may not, you may think this is a harsh way to put it, but you call God a liar is what you really do. Does Paul, based on this text, assume Christians will just mope around pathetically defeated? No. He really doesn't. Who is the person in Romans 8:13 who can't do what's right? Remember Romans 8:7? It's the one that's in the flesh. It's the one who does not submit to God's law, neither cannot. So if you get to a place where you say "I just can't", folks what you've just done is put yourself in the first category not in the second. And folks, people in the first category die. So if you say you can't you're basically signing death on your head or you're sadly misunderstanding what the truth about all this is.

Does Paul assume that I must wait until death to be blameless in body? Didn't he say be blameless in body so that you're in that state when Jesus Christ comes? Does he assume you have to wait until death? No, he's assuming that it is possible to be blameless in body now. If he assumes that it's because he knows, he's making the assumption that you have been equipped as a Christian to be able to pull this off. Now, I'll ask you this next question. When you believe you can't have victory who is really dishonored? Not you, not you. Let me ask you this. Are there others who are more successful at killing sin than you know then yourself? Do you know people that are far more holy than you are? Do you know people who have had much greater success? Let me ask you this... why do you think that is? Do you think it's because their resources are greater? Paul makes no distinction, folks, with regards to that. I'll tell you what it comes down to, what unleashes that power... faith. That's where it's at folks... your unbelief. And I'll tell you where else it's at folks... when you say you can't are you looking at yourself or are you looking at Christ? Answer that. Who are you looking at when you say "I can't"? What is the very essence of pride? Looking at self or looking at Christ? I'll tell you folks, ask yourself. People who are more successful at killing sin in their life, have you ever noticed, are they more or less humble than you? You see folks, the very essence of pride we don't study the cross because proud people don't think they need the cross and I realize as Christians you've had to have been brought to some place where you recognized some need, but there are some Christians who recognize their need far more than others and I'll guarantee you it's those people you find defeat sin with much greater capacity in their life through the empowering of the Spirit of God. The more desperate you are for what Christ has to offer the more holy your life will be, I guarantee that's the truth. Amen. You're dismissed.