

The Dangerous Symptoms of Any Lust (Chapter 9 of the Book, the Mortification of Sin)

by John Owen

The sermon highlights the dangers of lust and the importance of mortifying sin through extraordinary means, emphasizing the need for sovereign grace.

Duration: 26:37

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 28:13, Isaiah 57:17, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of examining one's heart and soul in order to understand the root causes of sinful behavior. He suggests that one should consider the state and condition of their soul when they fell into the entanglements of sin. The preacher also highlights several dangerous symptoms that may accompany lustful desires, such as frequency of success in seduction and judiciary hardness. He urges individuals to fight against sin with arguments rooted in the death of Christ, the love of God, the detestable nature of sin, and the preciousness of communion with God.

Transcript

This is a Stillwater Revival Books audiobook selection. Please join us at puritandownloads.com to see all the new 99-cent digital downloads, Reformation in Puritan Books, Psalms Singing MP3s, and so on, the new SWRB Puritan hard drive, and much more. The new website is state-of-the-art and contains Puritan hard drive videos, Puritan quote videos, free samples of Psalms Singing MP3s, a powerful search engine, new material, Puritan books, MP3s and videos that you may follow through an RSS feed, and it is very easy to navigate.

That's puritandownloads.com. The following narration is Chapter 9 of John Owen's work on the mortification of sin. Particular directions in relation to the foregoing case proposed. First, consider the dangerous symptoms of any lust.

Number one, inveterateness. Number two, peace obtained under it. The several ways whereby that is done.

Number three, frequency of success in its seductions. Number four, the soul's fighting against it with arguments only taken from the event. Number five, it's being attended with judiciary hardness.

Number six, it's withstanding particular dealings from God, the state of persons in whom these things are found. The foregoing general rules being supposed, particular directions to the soul for its guidance under the sense of a disquieting lust or distemper, being the main thing I aim at, come next to be proposed. Now of these, some are previous and preparatory, and in some of them the work itself is contained.

Of the first sort are these ensuing first. Consider what dangerous symptoms your lust has attending or accompanying it, whether it has any deadly mark on it or not. If it has, extraordinary remedies are to be used.

An ordinary course of mortification will not do it. You will say, what are these dangerous marks and symptoms, the desperate attendancies of an indwelling lust that you intend? Some of them I shall name. Number one, inveterateness.

If it is long-laying corrupting in your heart, if you have suffered it to abide in power and prevalency without attempting vigorously the killing of it and the healing of the wounds you have received by it for some long season, your distemper is dangerous. Have you permitted worldliness, ambition, greediness of study, to eat up other duties, the duties in which you ought to hold constant communion with God for some long season, or uncleanness to defile your heart with vain and foolish and wicked imaginations for many days? Your lust has a dangerous symptom. So is the case with David, Psalm 38, verse 5. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.

When a lust has lain long in the heart, corrupting, festering, cankering, it brings a soul to a woeful condition. In such a case, an ordinary course of humiliation will not do the work, whatever it be. It will by this means insinuate itself more or less into all the faculties of the soul, and habituate the affections to its company in society.

It grows familiar to the mind and conscience, that they do not startle at it as a strange thing, but are bold with it as that which they are wanted unto. Yet it will get such advantage by this means, it is oftentimes to exert and put forth itself without having any notice taken of it at all. As it seems to have been with Joseph in his swearing by the life of Pharaoh.

Unless some extraordinary course be taken, such a person has no ground in the world to expect that his latter end shall be peace. For first, how will he be able to distinguish between the long abode of an unmortified lust and the dominion of sin, which cannot befall a regenerate person? Secondly, how can he promise himself that it shall ever be otherwise with him, or that his lust will cease to multiating and seducing, when he sees it fixed and abiding, and has done so for many days, and has gone through a variety of conditions within him? It may be it has tried mercies and afflictions, and those possibly so remarkable that the soul could not avoid the taking special notice of them. It may be it has weathered out many a storm and passed under much variety of gifts in the administration of the word, and it will prove an easy thing to dislodge an inmate pleading a title by prescription.

Old neglected wounds are often mortal, always dangerous. In dwelling does tempers grow rusty and stubborn by continuance and ease and quiet. Lust is such an inmate as, if it can plead time and some prescription, will not easily be ejected, as it never dies of itself.

So if it be not daily killed, it will always gather strength. Number two, secret pleas of the heart for the countenance of itself, and keeping up its peace, notwithstanding the abiding of a lust, without a vigorous gospel attempt for its mortification, is another dangerous symptom of a deadly distemper in the heart. Now

there are several ways in which this may be done.

I shall name some of them. It's number one, when upon thoughts, perplexing thoughts about sin, instead of applying himself to the destruction of it, a man searches his heart to see what evidences he can find of a good condition, notwithstanding that sin and lust, so that it may go well with him. For a man to gather up his experiences of God, to call them to mind, to collect them, consider, try, improve them, is an excellent thing.

A duty practiced by all the saints commended in the Old Testament and the New. This is David's work when he communed with his own heart and called to remembrance of former loving kindness of the Lord. Psalm 77 verses 6 to 9. This is a duty that Paul sets us to practice.

2 Corinthians 13 verse 5. And as it in itself is excellent, so it has beauty added to it by a proper season, a time of trial or temptation or disquietness of the heart about sin. It's a picture of silver to set off this golden apple, as Solomon speaks. But now to do it for this sin, to satisfy conscience which cries and calls for another purpose, is a desperate device of the heart in love with sin.

When a man's conscience shall deal with him, when God shall rebuke him for the sinfulness temper of his heart, if he, instead of applying himself to get that sin pardoned in the blood of Christ and mortified by his spirit, shall relieve himself by any such other evidences as he has or thinks himself to have, and so disentangle himself from under the yoke that God was putting on his neck, his condition is very dangerous, his wound hardly curable. Thus the Jews under the gullings of their own consciences and the convincing preaching of our Savior supported themselves with this, that they were Abraham's children, and on that account accepted with God, and so confidence themselves in all abominable wickedness to their utter ruin. This is in some degree a blessing of a man's self in saying that upon one account or another he shall have peace, although he adds drunkenness to thirst.

Love of sin, undervaluation of peace, and all of tastes of love from God are enwrapped in such a frame. So such a one plainly shows that if he can but keep up hope by escaping the wrath to come, he can be well content to be unfruitful in the world at any distance from God that is not final separation. What is to be expected from such a heart? Number two, by applying grace and mercy to an unmortified sin, or one not sincerely endeavored to be mortified, is this deceit carried on.

This is a sign of a heart greatly entangled with the love of sin. When a man has secret thoughts in his heart, not unlike those of Nahum and about his worshipping in the house of Ramon, 2 Kings 5 18. In all other things I will walk with God, but in this thing God be merciful unto me.

His condition is sad. It is true indeed a resolution to this purpose, to indulge a man's self in any sin on the account of mercy, seems to be in doubtless in any courses altogether inconsistent with Christian sincerity, and is a badge of a hypocrite, and is a turning of the grace of God into wantonness. Jude 4. Yet I doubt not but through the craft of Satan and their own remaining unbelief, the children of God may themselves sometimes be ensnared with this deceit of sin, or else Paul would never have cautioned them against it as he does.

Romans 6 verses 1 and 2. Yea, indeed, there is nothing more natural than for fleshly reasonings to grow high and strong upon this account. The flesh would fain be indulged unto upon the account of grace, and every word that is spoken of mercy. It stands ready to catch at and to pervert it to its own corrupt aims and purposes.

To apply mercy, then, to a sin not vigorously mortified is to fulfill the end of the flesh upon the gospel. These and many other ways and wiles a deceitful heart will sometimes make use of, to countenance itself and its abominations. Now when a man with a sin is in this condition, that there is a secret liking of the sin prevalent in his heart, and though his will be not wholly set upon it, yet he has an imperfect validity towards it, he would practice it, were it not for such and such considerations, and hereupon relieves himself otherwise than by the mortification and pardon of it in the blood of Christ, that man's wounds stink and are corrupt, and he will, without speedy deliverance, be at the door of death.

3. Frequency of success in sin seduction, and obtaining the prevailing consent of the will unto it, is another dangerous symptom. This is that, I mean, when the sin spoken of gets the consent of the will with some delight, though it be not actually outwardly perpetrated, yet it has success. A man may not be able upon outward considerations to go along with sin to that which James calls a finishing of it, James 1, 14 and 15, as to the outward acts of sin, when yet the will of sinning may be actually obtained, then has it, I say, success.

Now if any lust be able thus far to prevail in the soul of any man, as his condition may possibly be very bad and himself be unregenerate, so it cannot possibly be very good, but dangerous, and it is all one upon the manner, whether this be done by the choice of the will or by inadvertency, for that inadvertency itself is in a manner chosen. When we are inadvertent and negligent, where we are bound to watchfulness and carefulness, that inadvertency does not take off from the voluntariness of what we do thereupon. For although man do not choose and resolve to be negligent and inadvertent, yet if they choose the things that will make them so, they choose inadvertency itself as a thing may be chosen in its cause.

And let not men think that the evil of their hearts is in any measure extenuated, because they seem for the most part to be surprised into that consent which they seem to give unto it. For it is negligence of their duty in watching over their hearts that betrays them into that surprisal. Number four.

When a man fights against his sin only with arguments from the issue or the punishment due to it, this is a sign that sin has taken great possession of the will, and that in the heart there is a superfluity of naughtiness. Such a man as opposes nothing to the seduction of sin and lust in his heart but fear of shame among men or hell from God, is sufficiently resolved to do the sin if there were no punishment attending it. Which, what it differs from living in the practice of sin, I don't know.

Those who are Christ's and are acted in their obedience upon gospel principles have the death of Christ, the love of God, the detestable nature of sin, the preciousness of communion with God, a deep, grounded abhorrency of sin as sin, to oppose to any seduction of sin, to all the workings, strivings, fightings of lust in their hearts. So did Joseph. How shall I do this great evil, he says, and sin against the Lord, my good and gracious God? Genesis 39 verse 9. And Paul, the love of Christ, constrains us.

2 Corinthians 5 verse 14. And having received these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit. 2 Corinthians 7 verse 1. But now, if a man be so under the power of his lust, that he has nothing but law to oppose it with, if he cannot fight against it with gospel weapons, but deals with it altogether with hell and judgment, which are the proper arms of the law, it is most evident that sin has possessed itself of its will and affections to a very great prevalency and conquest.

Such a person has cast off, as to the particular spoken of, the conduct of renewing grace, and is kept from ruin only by restraining grace. And so far is he fallen from grace and returned under the power of the law. And can it be thought that this is not a great provocation to Christ, that men should cast off his easy, gentle

yoke and rule, and cast themselves under the iron yoke of the law, merely out of indulgence unto their lusts? Try thyself by this also, when you are by sin driven to make a stand, so that you must either serve it and rush at the command of it into folly, like the horse into the battle, or make head against it to suppress it.

What does thou say to thy soul? What do you expostulate with yourself? Is this all? Hell will be the end of this course. Vengeance will meet with me and find me out. It is time for you to look about you.

Evil lies at the door. Paul's main argument to events that sin shall not have dominion over believers is that they are not under the law but under grace. Romans 6 verse 14.

If your contendings against sin be all on legal accounts, from legal principles and motives, what assurance can you attain to that sin shall not have dominion over you, which will be your ruin? But this is something to consider, that this reserve will not long hold out. If your lust has driven you from stronger gospel force, it will speedily prevail against this also. Do not suppose that such considerations will deliver you when you have voluntarily given up to your enemy those helps and means of preservation which have a thousand times their strength.

Rest assuredly in this, that unless you recover yourself with speed from this condition, the thing that you fear will come upon you. What gospel principles do not, legal motives cannot do. When it is probable that there is or may be somewhat of a judiciary hardness, or at least of chastening punishment, and your lust is disquieting, this is another dangerous symptom, that God does sometimes leave even those of his under the perplexing power at least of some lust or sin to correct them for former sins, negligence and folly, I no way doubt.

This was a complaint of the church. Why have you hardened us from the fear of your name? Isaiah 63 verse 17. That this is his way of dealing with unregenerate men, no man questions.

But how shall a man know whether there be anything of God's chastening hand in his being left to the disquietment of his distemper? Answer. Examine your heart in ways. What was the stated condition of your soul before you fell into the entanglements of that sin which now you so complain of? Had you been negligent in duties? Have you lived inordinately to yourself? Is there the guilt of any great sin lying upon you unrepented of? A new sin may be permitted as well as a new affliction sent to bring an old sin to remembrance.

Have you received any eminent mercy, protection, deliverance, which you did not improve in a new manner, nor were you thankful for? Or have you been exercised with any affliction without laboring for the appointed end of it? Or have you been wanting to the opportunities of glorifying God in your generation, which in his good providence he had graciously afforded to you? Or have you conformed yourself unto the world and the men of it through the abounding of temptations in the days in which you live? If you find this to have been your state, awake, call upon God. You are fast asleep in a storm of anger round about you. Number six.

When your lust has already withstood particular dealings from God against it, this condition is described, Isaiah 57 verse 17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him. I hid myself and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart.

God had dealt with them about their prevailing lust, and that several ways, by affliction and desertion, but they held out against all. This is a sad condition which nothing but mere sovereign grace, as God expresses it in the next verse, can relieve a man in, and which no man ought to promise himself or bear himself upon. God oftentimes in his providential dispensations meets with a man and speaks particularly to the evil of his heart, as he did to Joseph's brethren in their selling of him into Egypt.

This makes a man reflect on his sin and judge himself in particular for it. God makes it to be the voice of the danger, affliction, trouble, sickness, that he is in or under. Sometimes in reading of the word, God makes a man stay on something that cuts him to the heart and shakes him as to his present condition.

More frequently in the hearing of the word preached, his great ordinances for conviction, conversion, and edification does he meet with men. God often hews men by the sword of his word, and that ordinance strikes directly on their bosom beloved lust, startles the sinner, makes him engage to the mortification and relinquishment of the evil of his heart. Now if his lust has taken such hold on him as to enforce him to break these bands of the Lord and to cast these cords from him, if it overcomes these convictions and gets again into its old posture, if it can cure the wounds it so receives, that soul is in a sad condition.

Unspeakable are the evils which attend such a frame of heart. Every particular warning to a man in such an estate is an inestimable mercy. How then does he despise God in them who holds out against them? And what infinite patience is this in God that he does not cast off such an one, and swear in his wrath that he shall never enter into his rest? These and many other evidences are there of a lust that is dangerous, if not mortal.

As our Savior said of the evil spirit, this kind goes not out but by fasting and prayer. So I say of lusts of this kind, an ordinary course of mortification will not do it. Extraordinary ways must be fixed on.

This is a particular first direction. Consider whether the lust or sin you are contending with has any of these dangerous symptoms attending of it. Before I proceed, I must give you one caution, by the way, lest any be deceived by what has been spoken.

Whereas I say the things and evils above mentioned may befall true believers, let not any that find the same things in himself, thence or from thence conclude that he is a true believer. These are the evils that believers may fall into and be ensnared with, not the things that constitute a believer. A man may as well conclude that he is a believer because he is an adulterer, because David that was so fell into adultery, as concluded from the signs foregoing, which are the evils of sin and Satan in the hearts of believers.

The seventh chapter of the Romans contains the description of a regenerate man. He that shall consider what is spoken of his dark side, of his unregenerate part, of the indwelling power and violence of sin remaining in him, and because he finds the like in himself, conclude that he is a regenerate man, will be deceived in his reckoning. It is all one as if you should argue, a wise man may be sick and wounded, yea, do some things foolishly, therefore everyone who is sick and wounded and does things foolishly is a wise man.

Or as if a silly deformed creature hearing one speak of a beautiful person should say that he had a mark or a scar that much disfigured him, should conclude that because he himself has that scar and mole or wart, he also is beautiful. If you will have evidences of your being believers, it must be from those things that constitute men believers. He that has these things in himself may safely conclude, if I am a believer, I am a most miserable one.

But that any man is so, he must look for other evidences if he will have peace. Stillwater's Revival Books is now located at PuritanDownloads.com It's your worldwide online Reformation home for the very best in free and discounted classic and contemporary Puritan and Reformed books, MP3s and videos. For much more information on the Puritans and Reformers, including the best free and discounted classic and contemporary books, MP3s, digital downloads and videos, please visit Stillwater's Revival Books at PuritanDownloads.com Stillwater's Revival Books also publishes the Puritan Hard Drive, the most powerful and practical Christian study tool ever produced.

All thanks and glory be to the mercy, grace and love of the Lord Jesus Christ for this remarkable and wonderful new Christian study tool. The Puritan Hard Drive contains over 12,500 of the best Reformation books, MP3s and videos ever gathered onto one portable Christian study tool. An extraordinary collection of Puritan, Protestant, Calvinistic, Presbyterian, Covenanter and Reformed Baptist resources.

It's fully upgradable and it's small enough to fit in your pocket. The Puritan Hard Drive combines an embedded database containing many millions of records with the most amazing and extraordinary custom Christian search and research software ever created. The Puritan Hard Drive has been produced to assist you in the fascinating and exhilarating spiritual, intellectual, familial, ecclesiastical and societal adventure that is living the Christian life.

It has been specifically designed so that you might more faithfully know, serve and love the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as to help you to do all you can to bring glory to his great name. If you want to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, then the Puritan Hard Drive is for you. Visit PuritanDownloads.com today for much more information on the Puritan Hard Drive and to take advantage of all the free and discounted Reformation and Puritan books, mp3s and videos that we offer at Stillwaters Revival Books.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23736.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-owen/the-dangerous-symptoms-of-any-lust-chapter-9-of-the-book-the-mortification-of-si/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net