

SESSION 6 | PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

GRACIOUS STRIVING

Common current errors regarding the doctrine of sanctification:

1. Introspection is discouraged

"They should stop looking within themselves at all and look out to Christ."¹

— Dane C. Ortlund

"We don't mainly mortify sin by looking at it. We have to be aware of it, of course. But we don't kill sin the way a soldier kills an enemy in battle, by zeroing in on the enemy himself. Killing sin is a strange battle because it happens by *looking away from the sin*. By 'looking away'...I mean looking at Jesus Christ."² — Dane C. Ortlund

2. Emotions are misplaced

"Still, many of us buy into the misconception that to be moved by emotions is a bad thing. As Christians, we are fond of telling each other, 'Don't be led by your emotions.' This is partially true: we should not be led by our emotions into sin. But emotions *are* supposed to move us. God gave us emotions to move us toward himself in love and obedience... Emotions are not to be stifled or stamped out, but rather they are to propel us to God and godliness... And so we should remind each other: *do* be led by your emotions...back to God."³

— Carolyn Mahaney and Nicole Whitacre

"Godly feelings are a powerful defense against sin, moving us away from the heat of temptation; but they go on the offense as well, driving us 'further up and further in' toward the glories of Christ."⁴ — Carolyn Mahaney and Nicole Whitacre

3. Striving is downplayed

"There is no special technique to mortifying sin. You simply open your Bible and let God surprise you each day with the wonder of his love, proven in Christ and experienced in the Spirit."⁵ — Dane C. Ortlund

¹ Dane C. Ortlund, *Deeper: Real Change for Real Sinners* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 141.

² Dane C. Ortlund, *Deeper: Real Change for Real Sinners* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 139.

³ Carolyn Mahaney and Nicole Whitacre, *True Feelings: God's Gracious and Glorious Purpose for our Emotions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 50-51.

⁴ Carolyn Mahaney and Nicole Whitacre, *True Feelings: God's Gracious and Glorious Purpose for our Emotions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 139.

⁵ Dane C. Ortlund, *Deeper: Real Change for Real Sinners* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 140.

4. Striving is pitted against God's grace

"Thinking out the deep implications of the gospel and applying its powerful reality to all parts of my life is a daily challenge and a daily adventure. Theologically I understand that the gospel didn't just ignite my Christian life but that it's also the fuel that keeps me going and growing every day. My challenge is understanding how this works functionally. So, here are a few questions I go back to all the time that help me make the connection between what Christ accomplished for me and my daily internal grind: Since Jesus secured my pardon and absorbed the Father's wrath on my behalf so that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," how does that impact my longing for approval, my tendency to be controlling, and my fear of the unknown? How do the life, death, and resurrection of Christ affect my thirst for security, affection, protection, meaning, and purpose? In other words, how does the finished work of the one "exposed, ravaged, ruined, and resurrected for us" satisfy my deepest daily needs so that I can experience the liberating power of the gospel every day and in every way?

Thinking those things through, asking those questions, is the hard work I believe I'm called to, the kind of labor Paul speaks of in Philippians 2:12...

I'm not saying the Christian life is effortless; the real question is Where are we focussing our efforts? Are we working hard to perform? Or are we working hard to rest in Christ's performance for us?"⁶ — Tullian Tchividjian

Two factors always present in Christian obedience:

1. A clear obligation (v. 12)

2. A divine motivation (v. 13)

⁶ Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2011), 169.