



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 185

Theologians talk about the two aspects of sanctification as mortification and vivification (Westminster Confession of Faith 13:1). In addition to the passages listed below, there are numerous other verses in the Bible which highlight both these concepts (such as, Psalm 1:1-2; 119:11; Romans 13:14; 1 Peter 2:24).

**Mortification** – Mortification comes from the Latin verb “mortificare” which means to make dead, to kill. This is the negative aspect of our sanctification, where believers are called to mortify the old man in Adam. Though our old nature has died with Christ, remnants of this fallen nature remain in us until our glorification, and it still wars against us, and will do all it can to exert its power and influence over us. But by the leading and power of the Holy Spirit we are called to continuously put to death all remaining sin in us, to put away the old man, to flee from sin, to abstain from it, to put it off like old dirty clothes, so as not to obey it. Simply said, we are to daily reject the demands of the remaining fallen nature, starve it, cast it off, and slay it (Luke 9:23; Romans 8:13; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:5-8; 1 Peter 2:11).

Thus we are to recognize sin for what it is, not as a mistake or a weakness, but as sin; that which offends and dishonors God; that which God hates and is wrathful towards; that which was our tyrannical, ruthless and brutal slave master, for which Christ gave His life to deliver us from. Sin destroys lives, families, and churches. Thus we are to be ashamed of sin, hate it, mourn over it, confess it, and abstain from it (Psalm 38:18; 51:4, 17; Proverbs 8:13; Ezekiel 20:43; Romans 6:21; 12:9; 2 Corinthians 7:10).

Also sin no longer has any right to rule us who are in Christ. Though we can, we are no longer obligated or bound to sin. And by the power of God and indwelt by the Spirit we have the power to resist sin. Thus we must be on constant alert against sin, knowing the situations, places, people, and habits which we are vulnerable to being tempted, and to avoid these, to pray and guard our hearts lest we fall back into bondage and obey sinful passions (Psalm 39:1; Proverbs 4:23; Luke 22:40; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Thus, when we sin we are to realize that we are being inconsistent with who we are in Christ, with our new nature as the sons of God (Romans 6:6; Galatians 5:24; Colossians 3:9-10). We are no longer the old man in Adam; instead, we are the new man in Christ. Thus, the Bible calls us to no longer live according to our old life, but to live according to our new life. Otherwise, we are living contrary to, or incompatible with, our new identity in Christ. Luis Berkhof describes mortification as “that act of God whereby the pollution and corruption of human nature that results from sin is gradually removed.”

**Vivification** – Vivification (also quickening) comes from the Latin verb “vivificare” which means to make alive, to quicken. This is the positive aspect of our sanctification, where believers are called to vivify or quicken the new man in Christ. This means that by the leading and power of the Holy Spirit we are called to continuously put on the new self like new clothes, embrace our new life, be renewed in our minds, obey the commands of righteousness, and live unto God (Romans 6:4, 13; 12:2; Galatians 2:19; Ephesians 4:23-24; Colossians 3:1-2, 12).

God has provided the means of grace by which we are to grow in holiness; through both private means, such as the reading and studying of the Bible, prayer, as well as corporate means, such as worship, sacraments, serving, giving, and so on. As we do these, the Holy Spirit will continually form in us godly desires and virtues, and restore the image of God in us, progressively transform us into Christlikeness, where the fruit of the Spirit becomes more and more evident in our lives (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Ephesians 3:14-17; Galatians 5:22-25).

Luis Berkhof describes vivification as “that act of God whereby the holy disposition of the soul is strengthened, holy exercises are increased, and thus a new course of life engendered and promoted.”