

Mortification

ABSTRACT: When we repent of our sins and accept the call to be a disciple, there is an adventure set out before us. Adventures often involve hardship, and the Christian adventure is no different. Mortification of one's self is part of the call to Christian discipleship.

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 To [index](#) file: www.scripturescholar.com/Mortification.pdf
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Adventure (the struggle)

I will share about the adventure of being a disciple and compare it to a strenuous mountain climb. The adventure where you prepare and with challenge achieve a strived for goal. High adventure is divided into two parts—the preparation and doing the challenge. The Christian adventure is much the same. We need to prepare, and then we need to act. Make a plan, make preparations, do the necessary training hikes to get ready for the big adventure.

In accepting the call to be a disciple that is to accept Jesus' adventure plan, we must first commit ourselves to leave all sin behind. I do not accept that we all fall at least seven times a day. To do this, we must practice at least these three things—1. Frequent confession so someone we can be accountable to. 2. Mortification of our bodies already required of all Catholics every Friday and 3. Developing a relationship in prayer that you avoid sin so as not to damage your relationship with God. Mortification takes many forms, but it is necessary for spiritual maturity. Mortification is voluntary suffering. Suffering can have two effects. The first and necessary step is to overcome sin in our own lives that is to become saints. Suffering is one of the real ways to reach this goal because it helps us overcome our selfish desires.

God, as our Father, does discipline us—and we view that training as an affliction.

Hebrews 12:10-14 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. 14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

Psalms 119:67 Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey your word.

Psalms 119:71 It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

While God is disciplining us, we are also able to disciple ourselves—this is the better way.

Colossians 3:5-10 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

1 Peter 2:121 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

Jesus suffered throughout his life, not just when he was on the cross. **Hebrews 2:18** Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 5:8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered

1 Peter 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

What did Jesus expect the results of his preaching and miracles to be: **Matthew 11:21-24** “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the Day of Judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Jesus expected the people to mortify themselves. What is mortification—denying oneself—going without food, without drink, watching in prayer instead of sleeping, being uncomfortably cold, etc.

During the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas spent several weeks in each city they visited. After a few months, they returned to those cities.

Acts 14:22-23 Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

A true adventure is likely to include many hardships.

Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—and this is before the cross because at the Last Supper, He commends his disciples as the ones who have stood by him in his trials—and most abandoned him during his trial and crucifixion.

When we have prepared for the journey by choosing mortification and limiting sin in our lives then:

PART 2: The Adventure continues with the second phase, the ascent of the mountain. Here mortification takes on new meaning and purpose:

For Christian disciples, we must follow Christ; Jesus told us we like a grain of wheat must die. How do we die—we use mortification to die to ourselves little by little. For Christians to climb the mountain is to win souls for the kingdom.

St. Teresa of Lisieux, “**The money to buy souls is suffering accepted with love.**”

It is said that the blood of the martyrs is the seeds of the Church—I would say rather, it is the water and fertilizer that causes the seed of God’s word to grow in our hearts.

These are things that our society sees differently—difficulties, problems, annoyances, sicknesses, as bad—something that cannot come from God, and God would never call us to. Rather we should look on these as God training us and treating us as His children. Let’s get the most benefit from our suffering.

Isaiah 53:3-4 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

Colossians 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and

understanding. **Colossians 1:24** Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. **Colossians 1:29** To this end, I labor, struggling (agony) with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. **Colossians 2:1-2** I want you to know how much I am struggling (agony) for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. 2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,

2 Corinthians 11:23-30 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? 30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly, we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Luke 6:20-28 Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. 24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets. 27 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.

Acts 20:23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

Romans 5:3-5 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-6 Therefore, among God’s churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. 5 All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you

James 1:4 Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

1 Peter 1:6-9 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Galatians 4:19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,

Philippians 1:30 Since you are going through the same struggle (agon) you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Luke 22:28-30 You are those who have stood by me in my trials. 29 And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, 30 So that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

2 Timothy 2:11-12a Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with him.

Acts 13:1-4 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod, the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. 4 The two of them sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

Daniel was an especially faithful believer, and the Bible tells us of no sin of his—unusual—he

Daniel 9:3-5 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to Yahweh my God and confessed: “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, 5 We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. **Daniel 10:2-4** At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. 3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. 4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, --note Daniel did not fast on the Sabbath. For us Sunday is to be a day of rejoicing and not mortification.

Shortly after entering Europe at the leading of the Spirit for the first time

Acts 16:22-32 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

If we see our life as a Christian adventure—like climbing a great mountain where one does have to deny one's self and work hard to meet the challenges and often meeting unexpected challenges, then we will see denying our self for the spiritual good of others as an effective way to reach the top. It was practiced by Jesus and the apostles. Jesus calls up to pick up our cross daily—denying ourselves for the good of Christ's body is one good way to do this. St. Teresa of Lisieux in the bank of love, the more you give, the richer you become. We will overcome and win the crown of life.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

We can incorporate mortification into our prayer St. Ignatius Loyola said, one must make oneself indifferent to all created things. Consequently, one should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life.

As we are pressured and pressure ourselves for the body of Christ, pray for those who are active to become zealous and those who are zealous to become saints and apostles.