

# Overcoming “*the sin which so easily entangles us*” – Hebrews 12:1

## INTRODUCTION

1. Take your Bible and turn to **Hebrews 12**.
  - a. As you know, this is a great and monumental Scripture; there is much here to be considered. However, I want to focus only on one phrase, just one phrase of great import--and that phrase is found in verse one. It says, "*The sin which so easily entangles us.*"
  - b. I want to see if we can't this evening talk about dealing with entangling sin. It is the nature of man, even the nature of a believer, to be easily entangled in sin. It happens so easily, and frankly there are certain sins which more easily entangle each of us than other ones.
    - i. Each of us, in our own lives, have certain propensities for specific kinds of sins.
      - o It can be because we have in the past life cultivated habits of sin which now plague us even after our salvation.
      - o It could be because in our spiritual weakness even after becoming Christians we continued to develop habits of certain types of sin; certain specific sins that now we find more easily than others do entangle us.
  - c. It is true of every Christian that we have certain sins that easily capture us, but it is also true in general that sin easily entangles us.
    - i. And maybe it will help us to understand why that is true if we consider three very simple points about sin.
      - i. Sin has great power over our flesh.
        1. The reason it so easily entangles us is because of its power, its strength, its force.
        2. It exerts strong influence on our will, it exerts strong influence on our emotions, it exerts strong influence on our affections.
        3. **Galatians 5:17** says, "*The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit. They are in opposition to one another so that you may not do the things you please.*"
        4. The beach head that sin has with its power is our flesh, and sin exerts tremendous power, tremendous strength against our flesh. It is a very powerful force and it finds in our flesh a very willing ally, a very receptive environment.
      - ii. Sin easily entangles us because it is so close.
        1. Everywhere we look, there is sin. On television, on the Internet, at the grocery store, in books, and magazines...possibly within our own house.
        2. It's not wonder that sin so easily entangles us...it's everywhere!!!!
      - iii. Sin does not remain separate but it mingles in all our motives and all our actions.
        1. Sin is powerful. Sin is near, in that it is in us. And it isn't categorically separated. We can't draw a line and say "Well, this is where my righteousness ends and this is where my sinfulness begins."
        2. It has a way of weaving itself into the fabric of all our duties, and all our motives, and all our thoughts, and all our actions.
        3. It entangles itself with our purposes, and our plans; in fact, even our best deed. Even our best deed is not unmixed with sin. It is tangled up in our lives.
        4. In **Romans 7**, Paul cries out, "*Oh, wretched man that I am!*" Why? Because no matter how I try, I cannot disentangle myself from sin.

So sin is powerful, and sin is near and sin does not separate itself but is mingled into everything. It is interwoven with everything in our lives. The best that we do is somehow corrupted in some way--large or small by a taint of self-will, or self-pleasure, or self-righteousness, or self-gain, or whatever.

And so we become easily entangled, and as I said, there are certain sins that more easily entangle us, each of us, than others do. But if we are going to be the kind of Christians God would want us to be this verse says, "*Let us lay aside the sin which so easily entangles us.*" **Put it aside; put it away!!**

Now the question comes, "How do we do that?" It is not the first time we have been commanded to do that:

- **2 Corinthians 7:1** says, "*Let us cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh.*"
- **Ephesians 4:22** says, "*Laying aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.*"
- **Romans 6:12** says, "*Don't let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.*"
- **1 Peter 2:1** says, "*Lay aside all evil.*" Verse 11, "*Abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.*"

So we are very often told to set this aside. The question comes, "How do we do that?" From a practical standpoint we know, yes, it is the work of the Spirit and if we walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. We give all the credit for this to the divine Holy Spirit and yet there is a responsibility that is ours as we yield to the Spirit. How can I lay this aside?

Let us consider some principles that will assist us in laying aside sin

## **I. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE SERIOUSNESS OF OUR SIN.**

- I think the major reason we don't deal with sin strongly and firmly is because we underestimate its seriousness--to God, to us, to those with whom we fellowship, to the church, to the unbelievers.
- Our sin steals joy; our sin ruins fellowship with God; our sin diminishes fruitfulness; our sin robs us of peace; our sin renders our service useless; our sin mitigates against our effectiveness in evangelism; our sin hinders our prayers; our sin brings the discipline of God.
  - i. **Psalm 38:3** – "*There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; There is no health in my bones because of my sin*"; (vs. 18) "*I am full of anxiety because of my sin*"
  - ii. **Romans 6:23** – "*For the wages of sin is death...*"
- We need to understand the seriousness of our sin. It violates first and foremost our relationship with the Lord.
  - iii. **Psalm 5:4** – "*For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You*"

Secondly, another principle that is necessarily understood if you are to lay aside sin:

## **II. STRONGLY PURPOSE AND PROMISE GOD NOT TO SIN.**

- Take a solemn vow and say, "God, I do not want to sin. I don't want to break Your law, I don't want to grieve Your Spirit, I don't want to dishonor the Name of Your Son which I bear."
- The Psalmist did that in **Psalm 119:106**, "*I have sworn, and I will confirm it, that I will keep Thy righteous ordinances.*"
  - i. Unless we have that kind of resolution in our life, we will find it more easy to be entangled by sin. In fact, I believe that it is that kind of heart purpose, it is that kind of bold affirmation that is at the root of all holy living, and until we make that kind of conscious commitment to the Lord, we are going to battle the same things over and over and be defeated.
- There is a great verse, **verse 32**, in the same Psalm, **Psalm 119**,
  - ii. "*I shall run the way of Thy commandments, for Thou will enlarge my heart.*"

- iii. It is a very beautiful picture, "*I shall run the way of Thy commandments, for Thou will enlarge my heart.*" What it means is, I am going to run in the way of obedience because I have a heart to do that.
- iv. It starts in the heart. It is like a runner. A great runner, a long-distance runner, an endurance runner, a marathoner, very often has an enlarged heart muscle because of the tremendous development of his running ability and the strengthening of his heart to keep pumping all that is needed to that body as it pushes itself beyond normal limits.
- v. A great runner can run the way he runs because his heart is enlarged, and the Psalmist is saying, "I will run in the way of Your commandments because You have enlarged my heart. You have given me a heart for obedience." That's the kind of purpose that is absolutely essential.

There is a third component in this kind of commitment to lay aside sin, and it is this:

### III. BE SUSPICIOUS OF OUR OWN SPIRITUALITY.

- Paul said it this way, "*Let the one who stands take heed lest he fall.*"
- **Job 31:1**, Job says, "*I made a covenant with my eyes; how then can I gaze on a virgin?*" He said, I have got to be careful where I look because I don't trust myself. I got to start with what I see because I don't trust myself.
- **Proverbs 4:23** says, "*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*"
- There is a certain watchfulness; we have to be watching for sin's subtle movements within our own spirituality. The seducing motions of our own heart can sometimes rise out of the moments of our most supposed spirituality. Be suspicious of our own spirituality--don't trust it. Understand that except for the grace of God we would fall into any and every sin--and we can be deceived so easily.

### IV. RESIST THE FIRST RISINGS OF THE FLESH AND ITS PLEASURES.

- Don't try to stop the process near the end; stop it near the beginning.
- James notes for us a certain process in **James 1:12-15**: people are tempted when they are carried away and enticed by their own lusts, "*Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin.*"
- We want to stop it at the point of conception--not try to stop it at the point of birth.
  - i. We want to stop sin at conception, not after it has been conceived and run through a certain period of pregnancy (if you will) and now is about to give birth to the sin.
  - ii. We don't try to stop it at that point. We resist and oppose the first risings of the flesh and its pleasures. Sin comes to us promising pleasure. We remember at the very outset: my goal is not to please myself, but to please the Lord.

### V. MEDITATE ON THE WORD.

- There is a wonderful verse in **Psalms 37:27-31**; it is a bit more obscure than some, but it really is very, very important. Listen to what vs. **31** says, "*The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.*"
- When a heart is controlled by the Word, the steps don't slip. Another more familiar text dealing with this is **Psalms 119:9**, "*How can a young man keep his way pure?*"
  - i. How can you lay aside sin? How can you win this battle? "*By keeping it according to Thy word.*"  
By guarding it with Scripture
- It is the constant input of the Word of God that begins to fill up the mind and control the thinking, and that alone becomes the strength and resource in us that can resist the initial impulses of the flesh.
  - ii. "*How can a young man keep his way pure?*"
    - a. By keeping his heart completely committed and guarded by the Word of God.
    - b. Then in **verse 10**, "*With all my heart I have sought Thee; do not let me wander from Thy commandments. Thy word I have treasured (or hid, or kept) in my heart that I may not sin against Thee.*" It is the Scripture that must be meditated on.
- Meditate on the Word of God.

- iii. You are always studying the Word, studying the Word, learning the Word, meditating on the Word as you get the Word--so filling you up so that it, "*Dwells in you richly*," (**Colossians 3:16**).
- iv. You will find that it controls you. And as you start into some kind of attitude of sin or some kind of act of sin, the Word of God will act as a restraint.
- v. When you feel the impulse of the truth you know, meditate on that, not on the enticing of the flesh and its pleasures.

[So watch for sin's subtleties and don't trust your own spirituality. Resist and oppose the first risings of the flesh and its desires to please itself, and meditate on the Word--the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls]

## VI. BE IMMEDIATELY REPENTANT OVER YOUR LAPSES.

- It says in **Matthew 26:75**, that Peter, having obviously been aware of his sin at the crowing of the cock, "*Went out and wept bitterly*." There is something very admiral in that.
  - i. We ridicule, and rightly so, Peter for his defection, but we must also honor and respect him for his immediate response--his immediate remorse.
- Be immediately repentant over your lapses and go back to the place of confession. Repentance isn't only saying, "I'm sorry Lord, forgive me." It is saying, "I'm sorry Lord, forgive me, and I don't want to ever do that again." That's the stuff of real repentance. If that third element isn't there then you're not fooling God about the genuineness or lack of genuineness.
- When you confess your sins and when you say, "I'm sorry I did that, please forgive me--I don't ever want to do it again," name it--name it specifically.
  - ii. Let your own heart and even your own ears hear the naming of that sin, so that you develop in your heart a high degree of accountability with God for having named the very sin for which He is holding you accountable not to commit again. That's how you develop accountability.
- True repentance will name the sin; specifically name the sin. Be immediately repentant over your lapses.

## VII. CONTINUALLY PRAY FOR DIVINE HELP.

- **Ephesians 6:18**, after all the armor is put on and the battle against Satan and demons, after all of the warfare has been set and the battle is engaged against Satan and all of his forces, he says, "*Praying always, with all prayer and supplication*."
  - i. Jesus said to His disciples, "*Watch and pray for you know not when you are going to enter into the hour of temptation*."
  - ii. "*Devote yourself to prayer*," (**Colossians 4:2**) "*being alert in it*."
- Don't fight the enemy on your own. When you engage the enemy--pray, plead with help.
- But even in a preliminary sense, I really think anticipatory prayer is the most effective.
- iii. We need to start our day, "Lord, this is the way you taught us to pray, 'Lead us not into. . .'" What? "temptation and deliver us from evil.' Lord, please, today lead me away from temptation--please, today Lord, deliver me from evil." We need to set the course of our prayers before the tempter arrives, before the flesh begins to rise and entice.

## VIII. ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER BELIEVERS THAT HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE.

- "*Bear you one another's burdens*," says Paul in **Galatians 6**, "*and so fulfill the law of Christ*."
  - i. We are all in the same boat folks. We all struggle the same way and we need each other.
  - ii. "*If a man is caught in a "paraptoma" (a fall; a sin; a trespass), you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Each one look into yourself, lest you to be tempted. Bear one another's burdens*." We are all in this together.
    - a. It might be you going down this time; it might be me going down next time, but between the two of us, we are going to hold ourselves accountable for holy living.

- b. You want people around you who lift you up, not people around you who pull you down. You want people around, associated with you as friends and close coworkers, who will see your failures just like you will see theirs, love you in the process and lift you up and demand of you the highest standards.

## CONCLUSION

How are we going to come to the place where we lay aside the sin that so easily entangles us, and especially those besetting sins which we tend to fall into over and over again?

- **DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE SERIOUSNESS OF OUR SIN.**
- **STRONGLY PURPOSE AND PROMISE GOD NOT TO SIN**
- **BE SUSPICIOUS OF OUR OWN SPIRITUALITY.**
- **RESIST THE FIRST RISINGS OF THE FLESH AND ITS PLEASURES**
- **MEDITATE ON THE WORD**
- **BE IMMEDIATELY REPENTANT OVER YOUR LAPSES**
- **CONTINUALLY PRAY FOR DIVINE HELP**
- **ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER BELIEVERS THAT HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE**

I would say that there is no better place to start this kind of life pattern than right here tonight. Tonight we can start afresh in the new course that's going to bring us back here next time with a lighter load and a shorter list.

Maybe the sum of it all is found here in **Hebrews 12:2**, in those wonderful and magnificent words, verse 2, "*Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.*" He is one who in His striving against sin never fell. "*He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet He was without sin.*" He never fell, He never succumbed; so, if you are going to look at somebody as a model--look at Him. He was striving with sin even to death and never fell. He's our model; He's our example.