

Hebrews

Hebrews 12:1-2 – Removing The Besetting Sin - Part 1

January 17, 2010

- I. The Necessity of Discipline for Living A Life of Faith
 - A. Generally speaking, **Hebrews 12-13** focuses on showing us what **we need to do** to live a life of faith – or in other words, the part God expects us to play in growing to spiritual maturity and in living by faith day after day. An underlying, though significant major theme in this focus is **discipline – self-discipline** and **God’s discipline**.
 - B. **Hebrews 12:1-2 . . .** Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
 - C. Prayer
- II. Review Past Teaching On **Hebrews 12:1**
 - A. Just by way of reminder, one of the important truths that God places before us here in **Hebrews 12:1**, is that no athlete runs a marathon without the kind of preparation that puts him in the condition whereby he can run to win. This picture of getting into winning condition – with its examples of preparation, endurance, and focus, is what God says the life of faith is to look like.
 - B. Several weeks back, we talked about the “laying aside every encumbrance” part of running to win – and I want to remind us today that our race is not physical but rather mental and spiritual. Therefore, fitness has to do with our mind and heart – not the body. Therefore, anything that encumbers our mind and heart from running to win is something God is asking us to throw off.
 - C. Today we will talk about laying aside the sin which so easily entangles us.
- III. Let us also lay aside the sin which so easily entangles us
 - A. It is important to see here that getting into the condition of being able to run to win not only requires putting off every encumbrance, it also requires putting away all known sin. Here in Hebrews God is pointing

out that we are likely to have at least one known – but not yet dealt with sin that continues to trip us up or in some other way wrap around our legs to keep us from running.

- B. It is also important to see that no specific sin is named. Why? Because there is no single sin that afflicts all of us.
1. True, the scripture says, all sin is lawlessness (**I John 3:4**). However, this means that when we sin – be it deliberately or carelessly – we are choosing to rebel against God. We are willfully choosing self-rule in defiance of God’s rule. However, lawlessness is not a description of a particular sin. It is a description of our thinking and attitudes, our beliefs and values, in relation to all sin.
 2. The point? We each have our own favorite sin, or a weakness toward a particular sin, or an oft repeated sin that if left alone keeps us from getting into winning form or condition.
- C. How do we identify our besetting sin?
1. The first step is to want to.
 - a. I bring this up because some of us don’t want to. Yet wanting to is the assumed mindset of every believer. Which may make you want to ask, “How do I know I want to?”
 - b. When you –
 - (1) When you are as angry or broken-hearted over your own sin as you are over the sin of another – you have the want to.
 - (2) When you judge yourself as quickly and harshly as you judge others – you have the want to.
 - (3) When you are as quick to say, “How could I?” as you are to say, “How could he?” – you have the want to.
 - (4) When you see and feel the effect of your sin on others as clearly as you see the effect of other’s sin on you or those you love – you have the want to.
 - (5) When you require yourself to change as fast and as thoroughly as you expect others to change – you have the want to.
 - c. In other words, when you hold to a double-standard – an easier one for you and a harder one for others – you don’t yet have the want to. And if “the want to” is not your mindset, and if you are unwilling to make it your mindset, then the rest of this teaching will be of no help to you.

2. Which brings us back to the question – how do those who want to identify their besetting sin, identify it? I want to give you six methods – five from God’s word and one from me.
- a. God, through David, gave His people a most excellent method for discovering yet unseen sin – repetitious prayer for God to expose it. **Psalms 139:23-24** . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; [24] And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.
 - b. God, through Paul in writing to the Corinthians gave another method that works well – repeated times of self-examination. **I Corinthians 11:27-32** . . . Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. [28] But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. [30] For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. [31] But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.
 - (1) Though self-examination is a God-given method for discovering yet unseen sin, you must want to see it. Then you must be honest with yourself. Finally, you must put in the work necessary to examine yourself.
 - (2) And what should we examine to find a besetting sin? Examine your fears, desires, and longings for gratification, recurring thoughts, recurring emotions, attitudes when life goes against you, sources of security, most often used source for acceptance and approval, your desire for control, where you turn for relief from troubles.
 - c. God, in Hebrews gives us another method for discovering or honestly looking at our sin – listening to those God has placed over you. **Hebrews 13:17** . . . Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

- d. God, speaking through Paul to Timothy points to the scriptures as a ready source for identifying sin – including our besetting sin. **II Timothy 3:16-17** . . . All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; [17] so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
 - (1) Reading to gain information will increase your Bible knowledge but it won't increase your wisdom or your godliness. Reading to be more and more conformed to the image of Christ will increase your wisdom and your godliness.
 - (2) Reading with application softens your heart toward God and renews your mind. Reading without application hardens your heart toward God and leads to a kind of blindness that prevents you from seeing what God's Word says about sin and righteousness.
- e. In Matthew, Galatians, and Hebrews, God tells all of us to get involved in helping each other identify and put away sin.
 - (1) **Matthew 18:15-17** . . . If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. [16] But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. [17] If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.
 - (2) **Galatians 6:1** . . . Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.
 - (3) **Hebrews 3:12-13** . . . Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. [13] But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
- f. And if I might humbly add one more method to this list of methods given to us by God – asking those nearest and dearest

what sin(s) they see in us that we have not yet seen or admitted to or taken seriously.

3. Of course, identifying a besetting sin takes us only half the distance toward what God says is vital to being in the spiritual condition whereby you can run the Christian marathon and win. The other half is putting it off, laying it aside, dying to it, and replacing it with Christ-likeness. Both are required to get out there each day and run to win.

D. Why would we want to identify and remove our besetting sin?

1. To be able to run to win – to be able live a godly, holy life in this world for God's glory and the building of His kingdom (**Matthew 5:16** . . . Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven).
2. To be holy as God is holy (**Matthew 5:48** . . . Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect).
3. For the love of God. And if not for love of God, than out of fear – fear of God and the coming judgment (**Mark 12:30** . . . And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' **II Corinthians 5:9-10** . . . Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. [10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad).
4. It is the only way to build our life on the rock verses building it on the sand (**Matthew 7:24-27** . . . Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. [26] "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall).
5. To be more Christ-like (**Romans 8:29** . . . For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image

of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren).

6. To promote and protect the purity of the church, and therefore the life and power of the church (**I Corinthians 5**).
7. To avoid God's judgment like discipline in this life
 - a. **Galatians 6:7-8** . . . reaping what we sow.
 - b. **I Corinthians 11:29-32** . . . physical weakness, sickness, and even death

IV. Conclusion