

THE SINS THAT SO EASILY BESET US, Hebrews 12:1-17

Hebrews, chapter 12, reading the first two verses, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance (or weight), and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance (patience) the race set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (the author and the finisher of faith), **who for the joy set before Him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God."

To get the thought of what he is saying in this chapter, and I say that because of the word "Therefore," he says, "Therefore" upon the basis of what has been said, so let me say this, to get the thought of what he's talking about, we have to go back to the 10th chapter, and in the 35th verse, this is the way the 10th chapter closes, "**Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward**." He uses the term "therefore" again, you see? What he has been saying in this chapter about the adequacy of the sacrifice, and about the new and the living way which we have by the blood of the covenant is: **so you will not throw away (or cast aside) your confidence, which has great reward.**

Now, the confidence he is referring to here in chapter 10, is **the confidence for us to enter the holy place (now)**, of verse 19, "Since, therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way," we have confidence to enter the holy place . . . don't throw away that confidence because it is in the Holy Place that Jesus is in God's presence for us. Chapter nine, verse 24, "For Christ did not enter the Holy Place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, **but into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us." **The Holy Place is heaven itself**. Christ has entered heaven itself for one purpose, that He might appear in the presence of God for us. **And so, if He is there for us, we, who have confidence, are to enter into the Holy Place to receive whatever it is He has for us to receive. In other words, don't wait until you die to enter heaven (by then it is too late) . . . enter into heaven now "for great reward" (to receive whatever it is He has for us to receive).**

In verse 12, of chapter nine, "Not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." The Holy Place is where eternal redemption is, and it's mentioned again, in the fourth chapter, in verse 16, "**Let us, therefore, draw near with confidence**," See? There's our confidence again, "**Let us have confidence to draw near to the throne of grace**." We draw near to the throne of grace because Christ is there, having obtained eternal redemption for us, and He is there to intercede for us when we, with confidence, draw near. And when we draw near, **we receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need**. So all that the Hebrew writer is talking about, in the book of Hebrews, is: **the new and living way, which has been opened for us, which gives us the opportunity and the privilege to "draw near," which is to go right into the presence of God and to live in His presence . . . that is the confidence, he says, which has great reward.**

Hebrews 10:36, "For, you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised." Now, what is it that has been promised? First John tells us that, 1 John 2, in verse 25, very simply put, **"And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life." That's the promise, according to John. The promise that He made to us is eternal life. And so he says, don't cast aside your confidence, endure and do the will of God that you might receive what is promised,** Heb 10:37, "FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND NOT DELAY. BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH," he's quoting from Habakkuk, chapter 2, a better translation is, **"The righteous by faith shall live." That's what he's talking about . . . "life" . . . That's what's promised,** cont Heb 10:38, "AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM." He ends Hebrews, chapter 10, in verse 39, "But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith in the preserving of the soul," and **the word "soul" is "life." We are those who preserve our life. We enter into life.**

Now the shrinking back to the destruction, in my mind, is a warning against going back to the old Jewish system of works, which throughout the book of Hebrews, he is trying to get them out of that mindset, and get them to see that it is not that system of works that saves us. **It is what Christ has done, and it is our availing ourselves of that, that is important. Don't go back to the old Jewish system of works, because that system is going to be destroyed . . . don't be among those who shrink back to destruction. God is going to destroy that.**

But we are those who have faith to the saving of the soul, or the preserving of our life. We have faith that we're going to possess, or keep our soul, or actual translation, our "life." We're going to enter into the life that God has given us through Christ. A life which is lived by our availing ourselves of that which is, at this time, in the Holy Place, or in heaven itself. We have confidence to receive that. And when he mentions the fact that we receive it by faith, and not by the works of the Old Testament, that kind of life which is going to be destroyed, then he goes back in chapter 11, and he illustrates what faith is. And he gives us all of these examples from the beginning of creation, down through the Old Testament, of men and women who lived a life of faith. And he said they were faithful and, and gave a great testimony. Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 1, "Therefore, since we have a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us" who are testifying to us about the power of faith . . . we have their witness . . . they having born witness by their lives in the Old Testament, chapter 11:39, "did not receive the promise," but they had the faith which is an example for us.

With this great testimony of faith from the Old Testament, let us who have the promise and who can enter into the promise, let's be faithful (have faith in God like all of those who provided us with this great testimony). So he says, "Lay aside every encumbrance (every weight), and the sin which so easily entangles us." Lay aside every weight and sin which would keep us from having confidence to enter the Holy Place. Lay aside those things which would keep us from enjoying the life that He has given us, that is to be lived now (not waiting until we get over yonder as just about all of our pulpits preach today).

We have access to heaven itself by faith, so, let us lay aside these weights and sins, and let us run with patience, or endurance, the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus." That's the point: by faith, let us fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, let's depend upon Him. There are so many other things calling for our attention, but let's understand that first and foremost, is Jesus, who has entered heaven on our behalf, and who is interceding for us, and who has opened the way, whereby, we might have abundant life (now). Let's go with boldness, and with confidence, and avail ourselves of what He has provided for us in Christ.

So now, in the 12th chapter, verses 3-17, he begins to deal with the sins that so easily entangles us, or more specifically, the sins which so easily keeps us from entering in with confidence, to the Holy Place, and living the life that God wants us to live now because of what God has made available to us. He discusses these sins in verses 3-17. As we look at these sins, they are not your usual list of sins. They are not the sins that we warn our children about when they're young. And they are not the sins that we usually hear condemned from the pulpit. These are sins which are peculiar, for the most part, to Christian people, and they are sins which entangle them and keep them from entering in with confidence . . . keeps them from availing themselves of what is theirs, because Jesus has entered the Holy Place, and He is interceding for us.

The first one, verse three, "Consider him who endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart." Weariness and faint-heartedness, becoming weary in our Christian walk, and fainting by the wayside. We'd call that spiritual fatigue. Wanting to give up. Your spiritual-go has got up and gone. It's not what it used to be, things just don't seem to be going right, and we're sick and tired of being sick and tired. We have lost interest. We are working more and we're enjoying it less, and things just don't seem to be clicking with us in our Christian walk, so we become weary as Paul said, weary and well-doing. And we're tired.

The answer to that is in the words of Jesus, when in His ministry, He said "Come unto Me all ye who are weary and heavy-laden," and He said, "I will give you rest." He is still the answer. "All you who are weary and are heavy-laden," He said, I am the One who can give you rest. Weariness and spiritual defeat, and faint-heartedness, and the loss of interest, and unconcern with the things of the Kingdom comes, because in the words of the writer, we are not looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Other things have come in and we have taken our eyes off of Him. He, in an old cliché, is still the answer, and He's the only answer. And I still contend that you find in scripture the answer to all the world's ills, and all the world's problems. Politically, or socially, or economically, they all go back to the Bible. And I stand affirmative in the fact that you will find also the answers to all of your personal problems that you'll ever face in life. And that's the only place you're going to find them. You're only going to find them in Jesus, and until you're right with Him, nothing is going to click, and nothing is going to be right. Weariness and faint-heartedness.

The second sin, verse four, "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin." I would say that's the sin of compromise. You are not resisting the temptations and the sins, which creep into your life and so easily beset you, and get you off-track. And so you begin to compromise instead of being resistant. It's very easy to compromise the faith, and it's very easy to overlook what God has said, and do what we want to do, and be what we want to be, and excuse ourselves for it. We talk about the world that compromises, and people who compromise their principles, but think about the compromises that Christian people make. The little things that enter into their lives that keep them from doing what they know the Lord would have them do.

And then verses five through 12, a failure to endure discipline. He says, "You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons." Sometimes we forget that we are sons of God, children of God. Now, a lot of times, that's on the side of the fact that we just can't really accept the fact that we are indeed His children. We're trying to be maybe, and someday we'll get there, but sometimes we can't accept the fact that we are truly His children now. But God has many sons now. He had one only begotten Son, but that only begotten Son, the Hebrew writer said, His mission and His purpose was "to bring many sons into glory."

There are only two people in the Bible that are said to be a son of God before Christ, or up until Christ, and that was Adam, he's spoken of as a son of God, and Jesus, the Son of God. Now there are passages in the Old Testament that refer to angels as sons of God, but that's in a different context. As far as man is concerned, there's only been two. One was His son by creation, Adam, and the second was His only begotten virgin-born Son, Jesus Christ. But after Christ, He has many sons. His mission and purpose was to bring many sons into glory. So John says, "Beloved, now we are the sons of God" (1 John 3:2). We're not going to be, we are now. We are as much His sons, His children, as Jesus Christ. Not in the same sense, but still sons of God.

And so in verses 5-6, he says, here's the other side of it, if you're a son of God, you have to realize God is going to treat you as a son. And He's not going to let you get away with anything. God is not a grandpa and He doesn't have any spoiled children. He disciplines us, he said, and sometimes you forget the fact that he addresses you as sons. "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord." Take this seriously.

When God begins to deal with your life, and disciplines you, that discipline can take many forms. I think, personally, it can be troubles, be hard places, it can be temptation, it can be trials, it can be sickness, things that come into our lives that get our attention. "Don't regard lightly the discipline of the Lord." He deals with us as children, and don't faint when you are reproved of Him. "Oh, why is this happening to me, Lord?" Don't faint. Don't give up. Don't question. Understand that the Lord has a purpose in what He does in your life. For whom the Lord loves, He disciplines. Somebody said it well, He must certainly love me, with what I've been going through. Well, that's the point. If He loves you, He's going to discipline you, and you're going to go through these trials, disciplinary trials, and He scourges every son that He receives. And

scouring is not something easily received, it's a hard place in your life that He gets you through. Verse 7, "It is for discipline that you endure, you have to endure it; God deals with you as sons, for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which you have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us," at least that used to be true, it is in some cases now, I guess, "and we respected them," discipline always brings respect, whether we realize it or not, "shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" That's a part of life. "For they disciplined us for a short time that seemed best for them, **but He disciplines us for our good.**" Everything that happens in the life of a Christian, happens for his good. We may not see it, we may not accept it, but it happens for our good, **"that we may share in His holiness."**

Verse 11, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful," no one goes around bragging, and, and taking joy in being disciplined. "Yet those who have been trained by it," that's the root meaning of the word "discipline" anyway, is to train. It's not just to correct, it's to train. We are trained by discipline. "Afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." **So the trials, the hurts, the heartaches, and the temptations that we face in life, and the things that happen to us, don't regard them lightly, but understand that the Lord loves us, and He is bringing us into a place where it will yield a peaceful fruit of righteousness, whether we realize it or not.**

The fourth sin, verses 12 through 13, "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed." Spiritual weakness. The spiritually weak Christian can never bring healing and help to others. And so he said, "Strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble." The areas in your Christian life, where you are the weakest need to be strengthened, and there are areas in our life that are weak. We may be strong in some areas, in other areas, we need to concentrate on those areas that are weak. "And strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for our feet." Walk the straight line in order that that which is lame may be healed. We have an influence upon other people. So, by how we live, what we do, and what we say, and how we conduct our lives, we bring healing to others who are weak. We influence them.

There is no way that we can say that what I do, what you do, does not affect other people. Everything anyone does within the body of Christ, affects the whole body. I Corinthians 12, Paul has a great essay on that. And so that's what he's saying. Spiritual weakness not only defeats us in our Christian life, it causes others to continually walk in defeat. And the way to heal others and bring them to a place where they're not limping along, is for you to strengthen those areas that are weak, and those areas that are feeble.

Verse 14, the fifth sin, "Pursue peace with all men." Pursue peace. The opposite of that would be turmoil. Why must there be so much turmoil among Christian people? From the very beginning there has been turmoil. The disciples were grumbling and griping at one another the whole three and a half years they were with Jesus. They were arguing and fussing over who was

the greatest, and what position they were going to hold in the Kingdom. In about anything that you could mention, they had to have a division and a turmoil, and a fuss, and a fight, and a quarrel about it. And the same thing with the early church. No sooner was it launched until the Grecian widows begin to complain against the Hebrew widows. And there was murmuring among the congregation. And as you come on down through history, from the Crusades, through the Reformation, and down to the thousands of religious bodies that we have fussing and fighting today, to all the local churches, there is, at times, turmoil and strife. And when we're biting one another, that takes our eyes off Jesus. And we can't enter into the Holy Place because we are wrapped up with these things among us. So he says, "Pursue peace with all men," no matter who they are.

Sin number six, verse 14, he says, "Sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." A lack of sanctification. Sanctification is a term which simply means separate. It means different. We are to be a different class of people than what the world is. That's hard to do in our day and time. I guess it's been hard to do in any period of time, when you have to deal with the world. You have to make a living, just like the world makes a living. You have to deal with politics, and with economics, and with the state, and with the schools, and with the machinery out there. You have to work with people who aren't Christians, those who don't care, associate with all different kinds of people, and it's hard to be sanctified and not be sanctimonious.

But to be sanctified, that is to be different, to be set apart, and not be a part of the worldly system. It's hard, but it's necessary, because he said, "without which no man shall see the Lord." Without sanctification, there is no entering into the Holy Place, to the very presence of the Lord. It just cannot be done. If you're mixed up in the system of the world, you have got to separate yourself from it to the extent that you are different, and that's when, by the way, persecution comes. People are not persecuted because of what they believe. The world doesn't give a flip about what you believe. That doesn't bother them. You can believe anything you want to believe, you are not going to be persecuted for your faith. Now some other Christians might persecute you because of what you believe, but not the world. The world persecutes you because you're different. Not because of what you believe, but because you're different. Maybe those two things are intertwined and you are different because of what you believe, but the point is, people don't like anyone that is different. And if a Christian is different from them, they turn away from them, you see? But that's what sanctification is. It's being a different class of people. We're marching to a different drummer than what the world is marching to. We're out of a different mold.

All right, the seventh sin, verse 15, "See that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it, many be defiled." Bitterness. Bitterness defiles the many. You can be bitter and you yourself are defiled, that goes without saying. A person who is bitter has a problem, but his bitterness also defiles others. Bitterness has an effect on other people. I think, maybe, that this passage that he's quoting here has its basis in the Old Testament, the 29th chapter of Deuteronomy, verses 18 and 19, "Lest there should be among you a man or a woman, or a family or a tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God,

to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there shall be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood." Wormwood is the bitterness, and it comes in the life of a person because he says, "he turns away from the Lord his God." Verse 19, "And it shall be when he hears the words of this curse," when he hears My word and he is bitter, "he will boast saying, 'I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered *land* with the dry.'"

We hear the word of God and we still say we have peace, even though we're walking in the stubbornness of our heart. So I think that's what the Hebrew writer is referring to, 29th chapter of Deuteronomy, when he says, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God," because we always sell ourselves short of God's grace if we have bitterness in our heart toward people. This little root of bitterness will spring up. It's not planned. It's not something that people want to do, it just simply springs up, and it causes trouble, and it defiles many. And it keeps us all, you see, from entering into the Holiest Place.

And then the last one, verses 16 and 17, "That there be no immoral, or godless person, like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal." Now usually, we apply the word immorality to sexual sins, and that's, that's the case, **but here, he is applying immorality to what Esau did . . . "that no immoral, or godless person, like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal."** As far as we know, Esau was not guilty of sexual immorality, his immorality was that he sold his birthright, and he sold it for a mess of pottage. So, it is immoral whenever we sell our birthright, and our birthright is all of the privileges that we have as sons of God, and we sell that for natural things. It results in godlessness, and the immoral are godless persons, like Esau.

Here we have heaven opened to us. We have access to the throne. We have confidence to enter in. We have our sins forgiven, the way is made open, we have Jesus interceding for us, we have all the blessings of heaven given to us already, everything that pertains to life in godliness is ours, He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm, we are sitting with Christ in heavenly places; and yet, that choir stands up, and with long faces, it starts to sing "When We All Get to Heaven." No wonder their faces are long. They have been taught their entire lives that it is all over yonder. They have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. All they can see is the dismal despair of this world, and they cannot enter into the blessings that God has given us in Christ, which are all things that pertain to life and godliness, it's abundant life!

We sell it out for a mess of pottage. That, he says, is immoral. That is as bad as committing a sexual sin . . . to sell your birthright, as a child of God, and live as if it was not yours. Going through life living as if you do not have the resources of heaven, see? That's what he's talking about. That is why he repeatedly emphasizes that we need confidence to enter the Holy Place. It is in the Holy Place that we have all things that pertain to life, we have heaven opened to us, and we have the Kingdom of God as ours. We have everything that we need for life and godliness. We have all we need to be what God wants us to be, and to do what God wants us to do. And we have the help of the entire spiritual universe is

there for us. Jesus can do no more than He has already done.

Now, don't throw away that confidence, he says, but by faith, it has got to be by faith, by faith accept it. And we have all of the examples of everybody from the beginning of creation until the close of the Old Testament as our examples of what they did by faith, and they didn't even receive Christ. But having all of those examples, and knowing that it can be done, and that it has been done, therefore, let's lay aside every weight and sin which would so easily beset us. Let's run this race with patience and endurance, and look to Jesus, because that's where the answers are. Look what He did, He endured the cross, He despised shame, He sat down on the right hand of God. He was rewarded for it. And the implication is, God will do the same for you. But you accept it by faith when you lay aside these sins, which doth so easily beset you.