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**The Sin
Which Does
So *Easily*
Beset Us**

1203-A
Series: Starting Over

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The Sin Which Doth So *Easily* Beset Us

We are, these days, in the business of starting over, of taking inventory at the beginning of a new year and asking ourselves, “Do I want this year to be no better spiritually than last year?” Or “Isn’t it time for a few changes? Isn’t it time for my life to begin to more perfectly reflect the mind of Christ, in ever-increasing splendor, from one degree of glory to another?”

That has been the course we have been plotting for ourselves for the last four lessons, and we have examined in the process such distasteful issues as false guilt, a bitter spirit, and in our last study, the issue of being reconciled with those who have something against us. The purpose of our study has been to weed out the garden of our spiritual lives by taking a hard look at some very intense, but practical issues that seem to plague us, and then, during these initial days of a new year, wipe the slate clean and start over.

In this lesson, we take on another toughie, perhaps the toughest issue a Christian *ever* has to deal with, the issue of besetting sins. You remember, of course, what besetting sins are; besetting sins are those things that take control of your life while you just be-setting there, minding your own business.

Besetting sins are those things that Satan knows have a grip on you, and even though you seem to be growing in the Christian life and seem to be gaining ground in many areas, these pesty, sometimes devastating tendencies, seem to make you feel you are taking one step forward and three steps backwards in the process.

There are two extremes in Satan’s plan to confuse us or destroy us. The first is the “SPS”, “The Sinless Perfection Syndrome,” which says to the believer, “Those things used to be a problem to you, but now God has given you some particular touch of grace, and now you are above sinning.” The big problem with SPS is that makes God out to be liar, because God’s word clearly says in I John 1:10, “If we say that we have no sin, we

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make him a liar and his word is not in us.” God is not a liar, and we are not sinless. That’s the truth about Satan’s lie where the SPS syndrome is concerned.

The second lie is equally devastating, though more subtle. It says, “That particular sin is just my cross to bear. God never intended for me to have victory in that area. That is the way He keeps me humble.”

That, too, Beloved, is a bald-faced Satanic lie. Number one, nowhere in Scripture is sin defined as a cross, and number two, nowhere does God even imply that He expects anything less than an increasing measure of victory in the Christian life. No, you will not become sinless in this life, but, Beloved, you are to become progressively more transformed each day into His likeness, and that simply means more and more of Him and less and less of you, which simply means less and less of sin with its ungodly tentacles wrapped around your life. The longer you walk with Jesus, the greater level of victory you ought to have over sin. Period.

You say, “Then why don’t I? Why is it that I can progress in certain areas of conduct and behavior and, perhaps, even become a spiritual leader in the church, but can’t control my temper? Why is it that I can become a Bible scholar, you ask, or an expert disciplinemaker, and still can’t control my lust or my greed or my envy?

Why is it that I can live the life and walk the walk and still not be able to conquer a spirit of fear? Why is it that you read of men and women who have gained great stature in the Christian community and have compiled great accomplishments in the Christian life that suddenly fall prey to some gross sin, only to find that that sin had been gnawing at them for years, and finally it burst out into the open to destroy them, along with hundreds or even thousands of others whose lives were directly affected by theirs?

You may be saying, “What is the cause?”

You may be saying, “What is the cure?”

You may even be saying, “What is the use?”

I have good news for you, my friend, the Word of God is very

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clear. You and I do not have to either become or remain slaves to any form of ungodliness. The temptation may continue to haunt us, but the yielding to it again and again and again is *not the will of God!*

You say, well, where do you get your authority for saying that? Answer: From the Perfect Word of God.

Listen to Romans 6:

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:11-14 NKJV)

Now look at verse 17-18:

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:17,18 NKJV)

The Holy Spirit is saying so clearly here through the Apostle Paul that you and I were designed to be slaves to someone or something. Before Jesus came into our lives, it was our lot in life to become slaves to sin. Sin ruled us; it controlled us; it held us in its grasp.

Now, Paul says, consider yourself dead to sin. A dead man can't respond to the same stimuli that caused him to move before. Now, Paul adds, you have a choice. You can *choose* to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God's Spirit, and you no longer need yield your body with its members to function as the instruments of sin.

Sin shall not have dominion over you! Period! It is not the will of God for you and me to live our lives professing a doctrine of victory, while not *possessing* a life of victory.

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I believe the greatest problem most of us have in this life of faith is that we cannot seem to gain the victory in one or two key areas of our lives, so we assume that that territory will remain unconquered until we get to heaven. Paul just told us, no, no, no!

I have met very few Christians in my life who did not admit to having at least one nagging, besetting sin that continually ate at the very fibre of their faith, keeping them at least at times from living in the palace of victory prepared for them by a victorious God.

This much seems to be true: virtually every one of us has a key area or two that is so vulnerable to attack by the enemy that whenever the climate is ripe for it, he opens fire, always using some variation of the same general theme. And oh, so often, he scores a hit.

In this study, it is our objective to take a good, close look at the issue of besetting sins and ask ourselves some honest, penetrating questions about whether or not we want to be free from their dominion in our lives; and if we do, what are we going to do about it?

The phrase “besetting sins” is really only used once in the New Testament, though the theme is dealt with literally from cover to cover. That passage is Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 1-3, and we will spend much of our time looking at the message of that great portion of Scripture. Our outline will take this form:

- I- Besetting Sins: The Motivation
- II- Besetting Sins: The Exhortation
- III- Besetting Sins: The Invitation
- IV- Besetting Sins: The Expectation
- V- Besetting Sins: The Illustration

Hebrews 12 begins like this:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our

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faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (Hebrews 12:1-3 NKJV)

THE MOTIVATION

Here is probably the first key to it all: our motivation to transformation. It is very simple, but simply incredible. It begins with that marvelous word “wherefore”, and like therefore we are to always ask what the “wherefore” is there for. Wherefore simply means reaching back and drawing in all that has been said prior to this; the following statement is to be considered. In this case, the wherefore refers to the heroes of the faith who in Hebrews, chapter eleven, are listed for us one by one along with the tangible demonstrations of their faith that set them apart. So wherefore means that the people we are referring to here are those we have been reading about up to this point. The word also does not refer to us, but rather to them, meaning that *they* are the “cloud of witnesses” gathered about us or encompassed about us.

Part of our motivation, according to this passage, is to be the presence of a “cloud of witnesses” that literally surrounds us and inspires us to do the things listed in these verses. Now there are two interpretations of this phrase, “cloud of witnesses,” that bear looking at. Both have tremendous possibilities. The first is the one held to by both Vincent, Alford, and many other Bible scholars; and it is this: that the cloud of witnesses, Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, and Enoch, and Joseph and Moses, and all the others, are literally seated in the grandstands of heaven cheering us on, so to speak, or at least watching our lives much as the spectators would at a great athletic contest.

The inference is that this is our motivation to live the victorious life herein described, much as the presence of the home crowd at a basketball game cheering on the local team serves to inspire them to be faithful and stretch themselves to do their best.

The second interpretation, held by Wuest and others is that

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this cloud of witnesses serves as a reminder to us as they are called to the witness stand of our minds through the Word. They testify of the victory that is ours, if we are only willing to live the life of faith.

The inference there is that as we start to falter and yield to the temptations of life and are tempted to give up, God calls to the witness stand this great cloud of witnesses to testify in His behalf, and thus inspire us to press on to victory as they did. Both interpretations certainly have great meaning.

The word translated “cloud” in this passage does not denote a distinct outlined cloud, but rather the kind of mass of cloud cover that literally fills the sky. So it isn’t as though we are looking at each individual specifically, but more at the sum total of their lives and the overall picture they paint on the canvas of eternity. This was not a form of imagery peculiar to this passage, either. Homer for instance, wrote of “a cloud of footmen, a cloud of Trojans”, and other ancient writers used the same analogy. So we have surrounding us, a huge mass of witnesses, inspiring us, either by their presence or by their testimony or both.

The word used here for “witnesses” is the Greek word “*martus*” from which we get our word “martyr”. It means “one who testifies, or can testify to what he has seen or heard or knows by any other means”. Peter uses this word of himself in I Peter 5:1 where he speaks of himself as a “witness of the sufferings of Christ,” meaning he has been retained and commissioned to testify to the sufferings of Christ which he has seen. This word was used by the early church to designate those who had proved the genuineness and strength of their faith by dying a violent death as martyrs.

So God is saying to us, “You have a series of decisions to make in life; a series of judgments, so to speak; and you have no basis to make the wrong choices, because your God has lovingly called to the witness stand a huge crowd of witnesses to testify on behalf of the life of faith. In the light of their testimony, he is saying, there is really only one decision you should reach.

THE EXHORTATION

So much for the *motivation*; now let’s look at the *exhortation*.

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What are we to do in the light of this grandstand filled with witnesses?

Here's what we're to do!

1- We're to lay aside every weight.

2- We're to lay aside those besetting sins that so entangle us.

Now don't brush those statements off as lofty, unattainable guidelines and press on. These are specific instructions for each of us to follow in the light of the impressive array of witnesses that literally surrounds us, encouraging us by their presence and/or their testimony.

It is to these commands that we address the bulk of our interest at this "starting over" point of a new year. These are not options for those who want to win the Olympics. These are commands for every Christian; for every Christian has been entered by his coach, Jesus Christ, in a particular athletic contest, and as we will see momentarily, it is assumed that we will run to win or fight to win, as the case may be.

First of all, we are instructed (without options or a means of escape) to *lay aside every weight*. The word for weight in this passage is the word "ogkon" meaning a bulk, or mass, or a swelling, superfluous flesh". The allusion, as Wuest puts it, is to the training period preparatory to a race in which unneeded, unwanted flesh is worked off. Expositors add, "The Christian runner must rid himself even of innocent things which might retard him. And all that does not help, it hinders. It is by running that he learns what these things are. So long as he stands, he does not feel that they are burdensome and hampering." So the word "weight" has the meaning literally of an "encumbrance." Anything that does not serve to help you come out a spiritual winner is a "weight".

The word "race" here is the Greek word "agona" which wasn't used *just* for a race, but was used for any type of Greek athletic contest. We may not all be in the same contest, but we're all in *some* kind of contest with the enemy, and out-of-shape Christians, in the spiritual sense, won't be able to finish the course properly.

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So here we are, “starting over,” so to speak. The question, then, we must begin asking ourselves is this: “How overweight am I spiritually?” “How much excess baggage am I carrying?” We don’t measure that by how much we’ve “done” but rather by the “weights” we have in our lives, the things that we cling to that *do not contribute to our spiritual walk*.

- 1) These things may not be evil in and of themselves.
- 2) The things that are weights to me may not be to you and vice versa.
- 3) Those things that may not be weights to me may become weights to you, if they hinder you from running the race.

We have discussed each of those three issues at other times, so we won’t belabor those points; we’ll only mention them to remind us of what kinds of things actually constitute weights.

Now at the end of today’s lesson, I’m going to give you a project and that project will include making a “weight” list, a list of the things that simply keep you from running the race as effectively as you might. Remember, they may not be *bad* things. They may even be good things to some, but to you they may be weights. If they are, and if you are to run the kind of race Jesus has mapped out for you, then they’ve got to go. Period. The key isn’t whether or not they *visibly* harm you, but whether or not they tangibly *aid* you in winning the race. If they don’t help, they are not neutral. They are unnecessary. I’ll show you a few examples.

Now please don’t throw anything at me just yet. Listen first. Television may be a weight to some of us. It may not be to you. That’s fine. But remember, you are in training for the Super Bowl, and you don’t have time for anything that *does not make you a better runner, spiritually!*

Ask yourself these questions: “Does the time I spend in front of the television set turn my emotions and my thoughts Christward?” If not, it’s a weight. “Does the time I spend in front of the television set actually fill my mind with visual images that appeal to the flesh and conflict with the mind of Christ?” If so, it is a weight. “Is my time in front of the television set actually controllable, or once there do I become a captive to it and lose track of the time, and thus lose control of my priorities?” If you

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do, then it's a weight to you.

You say, "Wait a minute; are you trying to tell me that I have to become some kind of a spiritual hermit who spends all day reading his Bible and never touches the real world?" No, that's not what I said. I said if watching television is not spiritually helpful to you, and you are in training for the greatest event of your life, then why waste time or even tear down what you are accomplishing by the rest of your training. If you spend an hour a day in the Word translating your thought patterns into those that conform to the mind of Christ, and then spend three hours watching television superimposing images that contradict what the Word has taught you, either overtly or subtly, you're not really in training. When you get out and start to run as though you were, you're going to fall flat on your face.

Paul said it best in I Corinthians 9, beginning with verse 24.

Remember? He said this:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (I Corinthians 9:24-27 NKJV)

Paul is saying, "I may successfully impart the principles to you, but unless I live the life free from the encumbrances that keep me from winning the race, I will not find myself in the victor's circle." In other words, God isn't judging me by how effectively I minister, but by how effectively I run. I may be successful ministering, simply because of the prayers of others, or the grace God has given to meet a special need, but that is no substitute for running the race in shape. And if television (and that's just one weak example) is a weight, then it's got to go, or it's got to be controlled.

Eating may be a weight to you. (No pun intended.) Your

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hobby may be a weight to you. Your golf game may be a weight to you. It all depends on why you play, how often you play; and how you play affects you, and it affects your priorities in life. The issue is to determine what is or isn't a weight for you. Your job is a weight if it consumes you to the point that it conflicts with your higher priorities. Your car is a weight if it has become a god to you. The same can be said for your clothes or your house or anything else that used in its proper context might be good; but in your case, it has come to control you or weigh you down. Now, what are you to do with your weights? You are to find out what they are and lay them aside. You don't have to get on a soapbox and jump up and down and crush them. You don't have to determine they are wrong for everyone else. You just quietly, without fanfare, lay them aside and start running the race more effectively.

The second thing we are called to do is to lay aside "those sins which so easily beset us". The phrase "easily beset" is the translation of a Greek word "euperistatos", meaning readily, deftly, cleverly. The verbal form of the rest of the word literally means "to place itself around". The picture is one of a long, loose robe that encircles the feet so that while you are in the process of running, you suddenly fall and fall out of contention, only to find that you tripped yourself by not shedding that unnecessary garment, that specific sin or evil desire that keeps entangling you.

While weights may be weights to some and not to others; while weights may be basically good things, besetting sins are not. Besetting sins are specific areas of temptation that always seem to trip you up, and because you have not specifically dealt with them the way God designed, at the most crucial time of the race, Satan will throw you that old curve you always swing at, and down you'll go.

Your besetting sin may be anger. You may have achieved a measure of spirituality in most areas of your life, but at just the right time, certain things can always cause you to explode, destroying your testimony, and breaking God's heart. The key is that over a period of time you have simply come to accept that as a part of "your temperament" or the result of your "personality" and justified it, so that you no longer see it as

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a spiritual enemy. You may even have kept looking until you found a book that justified that behavior as spiritually normal, and have even begun to look upon it as a sign of maturity. Nonsense. If the Bible says it is sin, it is, no matter what anyone else says, and if it continually entangles you, you've got to stop, take a hard look at some of the cures, and...start over!

Your besetting sin may be discontentment. No matter what happens in life, you may always think you deserve something more or something better. You may become a teacher, a preacher, a Bible study leader, even a disciplinemaker, but if you haven't dealt with the absence of contentment in your life, at some time when you least expect it, it will encircle you, and entangle you, and down you'll go.

Your besetting sin may be lust, and you may have assumed everybody has it, and nobody's conquered it, so why try. You may have tried everything you know and gained *SOME* measure of victory, but then the problem returns, so you've given up. The question is, if you were trying out for the Olympics, and you ran in a certain race and came in fourth, then you ran again and you came in third, would you quit and assume that's the best you could do? Or would you not be encouraged that you made *SOME* progress and press on? Satan is such a deceiver.

Your besetting sin may be a sin of the tongue, and no matter what you do your tongue seems to always weave a web of destruction around you. You quote James as he tells us the tongue is a fire no man can tame, and forget to go on to the reality, that no man can, but God can. If your tongue continues to entangle you and keeps you from winning the race, then it's time to stop, look at the cause, look at the cures and, you guessed it...start over!

The second part of our project for this week is going to be to make a list of the besetting sins that entangle each of our particular lives and endeavor to begin again in the power of the Spirit to break away from that bondage and be set free. Sin is *not* to have dominion over us. No, we are not sinless, and never will be until we get to heaven, but Yes, we *are* to be continually progressing as we continually train, buffeting ourselves, bringing ourselves into subjection, until our every

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thought is captive to Christ. Sinless, no, but less sinful...oh, my yes!

THE INVITATION

The next thing we are to do, according to our Hebrews passage, is the natural result of having done the first two. We are to run with patience the race that is set before us. That's the invitation! You and I are not to spend our lives focusing on our problems and our sins. We are to look at them, deal with them, and then get on with the business at hand, the business of running the race or winning the game. Some people make a profession out of self-evaluation. That's not our calling. Self is dead; we're just called on at regular intervals to be sure we're not living as though He weren't. Once we've taken inventory and made the corrections, we get on with the business at hand. We weren't called to the vocation of taking inventory; we only take inventory to find our shortages, make our corrections and then get on with the successful Christian life.

The word "patience" is not placed in this passage without a reason. Nothing is placed in Scripture without a reason. It is a word that includes both passive endurance and active persistence. It means we don't lose heart and we don't give up. Running is hard work, and most of us just can't make ourselves do it consistently. It seems to take years for our endurance to change, our weight to change, our strength to change. It takes patience. We must keep on running whether we see any dramatic changes or not. We're not running to see the changes, we're running to prepare and win the race.

Your race may be different from mine. But whatever course God has charted for your Christian life is your race, and it will take time to unfold. God says don't stop running.

THE EXPECTATION

Then, of course, we have the Expectation. God expects us to keep our eyes only on one thing. Not on the race. Not on the cloud of witnesses watching or testifying from the grandstands. Not even on the runner ahead of us or behind us.

We are to just keep on looking at Jesus. The word looking "aphorao" means to turn the eyes away from other things and

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fix them on something. It also means to turn one's mind to a certain thing. The inference is that whenever the Greek runner even for one instant took his attention away from the goal and looked at the crowd, he was finished. One distracting glance, and he would break his stride, lose his balance, and lose the race.

You and I are to look only at Jesus. There is a reason. He is the author and finisher of our faith. The word for author is made up of two words which literally mean "the first to lead". He has been there. He's run the race. He's finished the course. He wears the crown. Look at Him. Not at anything or anyone else. The word for "finisher" means that He literally completed the course and did it to perfection, leaving us no doubt that the race can be run.

THE ILLUSTRATION

So at last we have the Illustration. "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Father." In all probability, it does not mean what we have so often heard, that Jesus went to the cross to experience the ultimate joy that would be His. The word used here is the word "anti" which literally means "instead of" the same word used in Luke 11:11, where we read: "If He asked a fish, will he for (anti, instead of) a fish give him a serpent?"

So Hebrews 12:3 is probably not saying *for* the joy that was set before Him, but rather *instead* of the joy that was set before Him. In place of the joy that was set before Him, He chose to endure the Cross. He despised the shame, but now He is seated at the right hand of the Father. It's over.

Vincent says this: "the joy was the full, divine beatitude of His preincarnate life in the bosom of the Father; the glory which He had with God before the world was. In exchange for this, He accepted the Cross and the shame." Thus the passage comes to fully complement Philippians 2:6-8.

There was a crown; but the way to the crown passed through the Cross. He had to lay aside everything He had (and He had everything), to run the race, to win the crown, a crown He already owned, but He forsook it long enough to run the race

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for us, so that we might tangibly see it *could* be won. Indeed it *had been* won by Him.

The issue of weights and besetting sins are two of the most uncomfortable ones we will ever have to deal with in the Christian life. Both involve choices: choices to lay aside things and habits and pleasures we may actually enjoy so we can go into training for the Olympics; so we can run the particular race God has called us to run. The Children of Israel were our best example of what it's like to allow your life to get caught in a cycle of sin that continually recurs and become so accustomed to it, that you assume it is the norm. Read Psalm 106 again. It is a perfect picture of the Christian who is running around in a cycle of besetting sin and doesn't even know it. God continually ministered to them, even disciplined them; but each time He gave them the freedom to choose, they made the same wrong choices, ended up with the same devastating consequences, and eventually lowered their standards to conform to their behavior, rather than conforming their behavior to the standards of a Holy God.

You and I are no different. Satan has tried to entangle us in an unending cycle of besetting sins, and he has tried to weigh us down with seemingly harmless compromises that in and of themselves are not evil; but they attach themselves to our souls, and we become flabby and slow, and we stumble and fall, and then we cannot finish the race. But God has given us a way of escape. He never intended for us to be castaways, to ride the bench, to not finish the course. Some of us have just forgotten about the way of escape. We've made ourselves comfortable in prison and assumed that's where we belong. God forbid.

We used to have two dogs. One of them was named Ralph. Ralph was not too pretty, and not too bright, but boy was he lovable. We had another dog named Daisy. Daisy was pretty, bright, and unteachable. It seems that because of Daisy's destructive tendencies (she liked to eat furniture no less), we had to construct little gates into the living room so Daisy couldn't get in; but they were so made that Ralph could squeeze his somewhat strangely-shaped body through the openings in the gate, and lie in the living room with the warmth of the sun covering his body, just where his canine cohort couldn't reach him.

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Ralph's problem, and the reason for this illustration, was that he could get *into* the room, but he wasn't bright enough to get out. So he would wait, wagging his funny looking tail, sometimes for hours, waiting for someone to come along and let him out of his self-imposed bondage. Every once in a while, however, someone would be standing in the kitchen eating, and Ralph would be standing, peering through the gate, wagging his tail and his entire body in an effort to gain our attention, sometimes even sitting up and begging for recognition, to be set free to enjoy what he construed to be rightfully his.

Then suddenly, it would happen. He would reach the place where he could literally taste whatever it was we were eating, and in one not so graceful motion, he would lunge through the hole in the gate and into the sheer freedom of the area where it was all happening.

He was locked out by choice. He had a way of escape, but he had deluded himself into believing he could get into that state but not out of it. Then, finally, the motivation became great enough. He saw someone else enjoying what he wanted. Once motivated enough, he found the way of escape.

We're not at all unlike old Ralph. We squeeze through the gates into areas where we don't belong, and after a few unsuccessful struggles, settle down to a life of mediocrity, a life in which we are separated by barriers that exist in our own minds from the banquet tables of spiritual riches. Unless we become motivated enough to crash through that gate and enjoy what God intends us to have, we will stand there forever and miss it. We may occasionally sit up and beg, or even bark, but when no one comes to bail us out, we assume God intends us to be in bondage.

Did you hear what the writer of Hebrews said to us in this passage? Let's paraphrase and amplify it. He said:

In the light of this throng of heroes whose very faith bears testimony that it can be done, God is commanding you to do the following:

Quietly list and then lay aside anything in your life that does not contribute to your spiritual growth and your ministry in others, in particular those things that deter.

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Secondly take note of and determine to set aside once and for all and continually each of those recurring sins that wrap themselves about your feet so that you cannot run, and get on with the business of winning the race that God has specifically and individually set for you. You do that by keeping your eyes on only one thing...the person of Jesus Christ. He is the one who laid aside the joy of being in the bosom of the Father, and traded that for a Cross. He despised what it cost, but it was worth it to Him for what it did for us; and now He is seated triumphantly with the Father, waiting to greet us as well.

So, how would you like to start over? How would you like to take a fresh look at the weights in your life, those things that unnecessarily slow you down, and at the besetting sins that trip you up over and over again, and once more place them carefully in the garbage can where they belong, and begin focusing your eyes intently on Jesus and nothing else? You would?

Then here's an assignment for you. Take a piece of paper to assist you in taking your personal inventory of weights and besetting sins. Then begin to make a list of some specific steps to take to deal with those sins so they don't continue to beset you and upset you. Here they are:

1- Make a list first of all of the weights in your life; the things you CAN do without that are either unfruitful or even interfering with your Christian life.

2- Carefully set about a plan to lay them aside; quietly, without fanfare, simply give them up. Your motivation is to consider the great cloud of witnesses that stand in the grandstands surrounding you, testifying that it is worth whatever it costs to put Jesus Christ first. Make a daily check list and each day check off whether or not you have continued to live free from those weights. Yours may be certain books you read or places you go, or things you do...whatever they are, check up on yourself *each* day so they will not return to haunt you unnoticed.

3- Then make a list of the sins that so easily beset you. No one needs to see the list but you. List the things that simply recur again and again in your life and come back over and over when your guard is down. It may be uncontrolled anger. It may

The Sin Which Does So *Easily* Beset Us

be lust or an uncontrolled tongue. Remember your motivation again is that cloud of witnesses testifying that the life of faith works.

4- Now begin the process of taking one of those sins and for one month, focus on the victory Jesus Christ bought for us on that cross, and how that victory cancelled the power of that particular sin once and for all. Every time that problem begins to creep into your life, begin to worship. Visualize Calvary. “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” (Hebrews 12:3 NKJV) But don’t give up, don’t stop training, don’t stop running. The victory is yours...not Satan’s. *Don’t focus on the sin. Look at it only long enough to hate it. Then focus on Jesus, and the price He paid to rid you of it.*

5- Every day, as you close the day, take note of the times God gave you victory that day. Don’t focus on the few times you slipped. Focus on the grace God gave you and expect God for greater grace and greater victories the next day. Should you slip, simply claim I John 1:9 and praise God for His mercy, and you guessed it...start all over again.

How would you like to start over? That’s the question. How would you like to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset you? That’s the issue. Then,

...since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, [let’s do it] let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for of the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1,2 NKJV)

(See poem next page.)

The Sin Which Does So *Easily* Beset Us

HE HAS RUN THE RACE

He has run the race, and the victory's been won!
Our God was victorious; He gave us His Son
Now the victory is ours; *He* died in *our* place
Now we, in His power, can get on with the race.

Those weights that deter us must not weigh us down
They rob us of joy and of heaven's sweet crown
And by His sweet grace, may we see oe'r and oe'r
Those besetting sins will destroy us no more.

We can still have the victory; God has conquered the sin
So why don't we right now...start over again?
With a fresh breath of heaven, His will to resign
Let's shout it together; "*The victory's mine!*"

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