

Hebrews

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] In your scripture sheet, we have entered into Hebrews chapter 12, and in our last session together, we were talking somewhat about the sin that does so easily beset us, and that's in chapter 12.

I don't want to belabor the point, but I do want to make an issue of the fact that this is an area of our personal responsibility.

It may sound, I'm sure it does, a lot more spiritual to say, well, I just pray and ask God to take away the sin that does so easily beset us.

But that's not the formula. The formula is that we are to lay aside, that is, it is an action on our part, and to say, well, I prayed and asked God to take away my besetting sin, and he hasn't done it, so it must not bother him too much.

That's kind of rationalizing that we're capable of, guys. And the truth of the matter is, we are to set aside that sin, and God is not going to expect us to do that if he hasn't given us the ability to do so.

[1 : 13] He does not make unreasonable demands. He isn't saying, why not one to another? Now, I know for some of you it's really difficult, and I know you probably won't be able to handle it, and you just can't keep from lying one to another.

I understand, that's okay. No, no, no, no, no. We are to lie not one to another. It is we who formulate a lie, and we who tell the lie, and we who propagate the lie. And Paul's writing to the Ephesians and says, stop it.

Now, if you can't stop it, then the prohibition is worthless. But we can. And we've also pointed out, and I don't want to belabor this point, but it is very, very important to note, that there is a distinction between the will and the ability.

Remember, the ability, the power for godly living is not yours. It is God's. He provides the power. We provide the will. And the power operates when we will it to. Now, this is an important concept, and I don't want to belabor the point, but at the same time, I don't want to pass over it either.

[2 : 33] Because no one is suggesting that willpower is the answer. Because it isn't. Willpower is worthless. It is God's power that is the only power that really works against the flesh.

But, it is our will that releases that power. So, the will is ours. The power is God's.

And what this means is, there is an incredible concert. A dual working there between God and us. There is a partnering between deity and humanity, whereby God is pleased to operate with us and function with us, so that it is not all of God and it is not all of you.

It is a partnering thing. And we find this principle all throughout the Bible, beginning in the book of Genesis, where God does not need any human beings to do anything. But, in his grace and in his wisdom, he has chosen to implement human effort and human endeavors in his plan and program.

[3 : 45] So, this is a gracious condescension on the part of God, whereby he provides the power, but at the same time, he does not overpower our will, so that he says, listen, I want you to be spiritual.

And you are not bent that way, but I am going to make you do it. No, he does not. In fact, you can be as carnal as you choose to be. And remember, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, in the very first chapter, he opens his epistle to the Corinthians, and he calls them saints.

That means separated ones. That means holy ones. A saint is one whom God has called out of the world and set him aside unto himself.

So, you are still in the world, but you are not of the world. You are separated from the world unto God. And this is made very, very clear throughout the New Testament that what constitutes sainthood is the fact that we have been born again.

We have been conformed to the image of Christ. And it is an incredible thing. And at the same time, he calls these people saints, holy ones, separated ones.

[5 : 07] You read a couple of chapters later, and he chides them for their carnality. And he says, there are divisions among you, and rankling, and arguing, and everything.

You are behaving in a fleshly... Are you not carnal? I wanted to speak unto you as unto spiritual. That is, of mature Christians.

But I couldn't do so because you're still little babies. Spiritually, you haven't grown up at all. I'd like to feed you with meat, but you're not able to handle meat. We've got to go back to the milk of the Word because you haven't been growing and maturing.

So, is it possible for a Christian to be carnal? Absolutely. Matter of fact, guys, let me tell you. I am persuaded, this is a Wiseman opinion, and it may not be worth much, but I am persuaded that the greater percentage of believers throughout the world today are walking in the flesh, not in the Spirit. And if that were reversed, the world would be well aware of the impact the body of Christ would have upon it. I've stated before, the greatest liability, the greatest...

[6 : 22] Let's start with the asset. The greatest asset that God has on this planet is a believer in Jesus Christ who is walking in the Spirit.

That's the greatest asset, and the greatest advertisement for the Gospel, and the greatest liability is one who is truly a believer and is walking in the flesh, which is where most Christians are.

Powerless, ineffective, weak, dissatisfied, agitated, no peace, no joy.

that's where too many are. And there's really no excuse for it when He has made so much more available to us. And this is the burden that Paul wrote to the Galatians, and he said, if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

And we're not going to turn to it, but for your own consideration, the activities of the flesh are an ugly list, and they are found there in Galatians 5, right along with the fruit of the Spirit.

[7 : 33] So, the implication is, if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. And we all have desires of the flesh. Because self-centeredness is something that is automatic to our old sin nature.

And if we walk in the Spirit, we'll not fulfill the desires of the flesh. And the opposite is true. If you don't walk in the Spirit, you will fulfill the desires of the flesh. Simple as that. So, this is what the burden is here.

The sin that does so easily beset us that is found in verse 1 of Hebrews 12. And as we flip the page and go to continuing under 12b, let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

And writers of Scripture often use everyday situations just like the Apostle Paul does when he talks to the Corinthians about know you not that they which run in a race run all but just one receives the prize because there's only one winner and run so that you may receive.

And here the principle is the same. Running with patience. And the word patience in the Greek is that our old friend hupo monie and it means the willingness and the ability to hang in there when the going gets rough.

[8 : 49] it means to persevere when under pressure and under temptation to quit. You don't. Someone has said it's always too soon to quit.

And when you think you've reached the end of your rope just tie a knot and hang on because it's too soon to quit. Running with patience the race that is set before us.

And life you know life is is a kind of a race like that. And while we're doing it the thing that will more than anything else allow you to maintain your posture and your peace of mind and your determination in running that race is when you continue to look at the object at the finish line and that is in verse 2.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. He is what it's all about. And as long as we keep our eyes on Him that's the only guarantee that we can keep our eyes off ourselves.

Because that's what we most tend to do is look to ourselves. So we are to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. He's the one who began it.

[10 : 13] He's the one who completes it and it is it makes Him a complete Savior from beginning to end in every way. Some of the other translations render this looking away to the author and perfecter or the completer of our faith.

And this is reminiscent of what Paul wrote to the Colossians. You are complete in Him. If you are complete what are you lacking? Nothing.

That's what completeness means. Nothing is lacking. We are complete in Him. The author and finisher of our faith. Looking away from looking away unto our faiths princely leader and perfecter Jesus.

That's the Reims version. Berkeley says with our eyes on Jesus the cause and completer of our faith. And everybody who's in a race if you've ever gone to a track meet one thing you will not see the racers doing and that is looking up into the stands.

They're looking ahead to the finish line. Their eyes are on the finish line. And if it is a tape that is stretched across there there's only going to be one person who's going to break that tape.

[11 : 32] And they look at that tape stretched across there and they are straining and reaching and buying to get to that tape first. That's the whole point of the race.

That's winning the race. Who for the joy this is talking about Christ who for the joy that was set before him endure the cross despising the shame.

Now I want to park here just a little while. Is this an appropriate word to describe what follows joy? The joy that was set before him? Can you think in terms of the cross and what was involved with the cross and the shame and the ignominy joy in that?

That almost sounds perverse doesn't it? For the joy set before him? Listen Jesus was not a sadist. [12 : 52] He did not relish this. How could it possibly be that this was an expression of joy that was set before him?

What do you think? Roger? Yeah. Yeah. The finish line. Joe? The joy of having rest come to him. Giving us the opportunity to come to him and have fellowship after him. That's the joy looking forward to. Amazing. Amazing. The joy was in the realization that what he was going to do on that cross enabled him to purchase you.

To buy you. To pay for you. I don't know about you but when I look at myself I ask how can that be? But that's exactly what he's talking about. Fellas this involves a kind of love that we can only think about and talk about but we don't know this kind of love.

[14 : 09] We don't experience this kind of love. This is that incomparable love of God. And that little word that we've looked at before in John 3.16 for God so loved the world and remember we related to you that the word two little letters so s-o in the English God so loved the world doesn't say that much at all in English but in the Greek the word is utos an English spelling would be O-U-T-O-U-S utos and the Greek it doesn't mean so it means in this manner or in this way and what that is describing is that the love that God had for the world was not a matter of quantity it was a matter of quality it means the kind of love

God had for the world not the amount but the kind of love and that speaks volumes this was a love that was of a different quality a different kind than anything that we can experience and that's the way that's the manner in which God loved us and that is just absolutely incredible endure the cross despising the shame and the word despised in the Greek literally means to look down your nose at to look upon something as being beneath you and not worthy of any dignity that you might give it he despised the shame the shame and ignominy that Christ had to endure with the mocking and the crown of thorns and the cruel treatment and the beatings and being stripped naked where he was probably on that cross with nothing but like a loin cloth around him abject shame how did he regard all of that that would have been incredibly embarrassing he dismissed it as nothing he was willing to endure put up with the shame the ignominy the natural human embarrassment that he would have been exposed to he regarded it as nothing because of what the payoff was going to be and that was going to be you and me

Roger well we know that he could have called twelve legions of angels to rescue him and of course he chose not to do that and in his high priestly prayer in John seventeen in the garden of Gethsemane just hours before the arresting police from the temple came for him he cried out and said father if it be possible that's quite a qualifying praise if it be possible let this cup pass from me he was talking about the cup the Hebrews had a way of expressing something of whatever is in the cup you drink it and maybe it is bitter and maybe it is bitter to the bottom or maybe it is sweet wine or whatever it is but draining the cup is an analogy that they use for whatever that present experience is that you're dealing with at the time and the cup that he was talking about was a cup of suffering a cup of death a cup of separation that was going to be realized between him and his father and fellas we've talked a little bit about this in the past and

I wish I could say that there was some kind of a rupture that took place in the triune Godhead that none of us can begin to imagine because the father the son and the holy spirit in that triune nature

of there being one God subsisting in three persons enjoyed a unity and a harmony the likes of which we can even imagine in our humanity and throughout eternity past that had never been interrupted and never been changed but now it was going to be and that's why he would cry out my God my God why have you forsaken me something happened in the very nature and character of God that was just awesome and had never happened before that separation more than anything else is what

Jesus was really concerned about that's what he was praying about that's the cup that he's talking about as horrible as the physical pain was and the nails and the feet and hands and the crown of thorns the spear on the side the beatings and all the rest of it as horrible as that was those were mere physical pains that cannot be compared with the kind of deity pain that would result from the cleavage between the father and the son and I can't go beyond that because I don't know what that involved but I am satisfied that something is there and it was terribly upsetting to Christ and that's why he cried out saying if it be possible let this cup pass from me and what shall I say father save me from this hour and then he said but for this hour came I into the world so nevertheless not my will but yours be done

[20 : 34] Joe he took on the sin of ours and of course that separated him from God that sin that's what unbelief is and look at the sorrow we're going to have we don't believe because that belief is separation from God not that unbelief is separation from God and that's what's going to be so bad being in hell you know is the separation from God that's right that will be that's not having a fellowship with him that will be the ultimate expression Jesus was going to experience that separation you know because of the sin he took on at time and here there's two things two things that we are really remiss in understanding and unfortunately there are a lot of believers who don't understand this very well and I'm not saying that I'm one that does because I certainly don't have the appreciation for it that

I need but the world doesn't even come close and that is the two things they have little or no real appreciation for the sinfulness of the human heart on the one hand nor for the holiness of the God of heaven on the other hand and these are poles apart and most of the world just doesn't understand none of the world understands this and much of what we would call Christendom does not understand it either because if we did we would certainly be living different lives than we do to realize that fellas none of us know what it is like to be absolutely perfect and holy and be sinned against we don't have any idea what that would be like we commit wrongs one to another all the time offenses in word and deed to one another but in essence we are just one sinner offending another sinner but when the offense is directed toward an absolutely holy God that's a whole different thing and that's exactly why

Jesus came to remove that barrier and it is this this is why it's called the good news this is something that the world does not begin to understand and the world doesn't even have a clue that they don't have a clue Raj I took a book up to a camp with me called The Holiness of God by R.C. Pro yeah that's an excellent excellent book yeah it's probably my estimation it's probably the best book of R.C. Pro ever had written and he wrote a number of books yes I hadn't really thought of this before until you just mentioned it now but take this cup from me it follows to the last supper and to me it gives a little bit different meaning to drink of the cup yeah yeah the cup of suffering in fact just this last Sunday we had a class in the 9 o'clock hour that Ray Vanderlaan provided with from Focus on the Family and Ron Gannon has been showing this series for quite some time now and they made much of that issue of that fifth cup and that's the cup that Christ was called upon to drink and just absolutely amazing Paul when you said you know

I've seen people in life that knew they were dying deathbed and that peace overcomes them not to take away from us but that just always blew me away I mean Christ didn't want to die you can tell I've seen people want to die in bed and get that peace and they're ready to go I love the Lord and I'm scared yeah well that's that unknown I mean I know where I'm going but that's what me Christ didn't whoa anyway take this cup from me I ain't ready to go and then you see these other people with that peace you know yeah I think you know who's really wounding away John Wroc yeah man he had gray in his eye and all and I want to look two days before he passed yeah I'm ready to go now you go live your life I'll live mine yeah I'm reminded of a

[25 : 10] Sunday school teacher asked a little bunch of first graders in his class of how many of you want to go to heaven and everybody raised their hand except this little boy in the front row he didn't raise his hand and he called him by name and he says I don't understand you didn't raise

your hand he said don't you want to go to heaven don't you want to go to heaven when you die and the old boy says well yeah when I die but I thought you were getting up a load to go now he didn't want to do it he didn't do it he didn't want to call to Paul's comment I don't know if you know of Roy Dobbins he's a pharmacist who owns a pharmacy here in town and he's been held at some point as a robbery and what do you even tell you to go to jail or what do you do to me yeah yeah well yeah that's when your time when your time is ready you need to be ready and someone has said the closer you get to

God the closer you want to get and there's truth to that too there is a peace and I refer to it as dying grace and the scriptures make it very clear that there is such a thing as dying grace but don't expect dying grace while you're living someone has said you know God really appreciates those martyrs who in times past have given their lives for him in the cause of Christ and it's great to be willing to die for Christ but right now what he really wants you to do is live for him and the dying grace will take care of itself when that time comes and there is a peace that passes understanding yes yes I have and I've also talked with a number of people who operate the hospice organization and I can't say enough about these folks because they perform a very unusual and a very necessary service in simply aiding people in their exit from this life and I've talked with a number of hospice people and they say more than one has told me that the difference between someone who knows and loves the

Lord and someone who has no use for spiritual things or no interest in them at all the difference in their death scenes in their last few days is usually quite remarkable there's a lot of unrest a lot of agitation a lot of nervousness a lot of anxiety as opposed to those who are true believers in Christ and really that's predictable that's what we ought to expect I well remember Ravi Zacharias one of my heroes and I think I've told you about this before but I've heard him say this now on two different occasions it was when his father-in-law was on his death bed and this was just within the last couple of years and he had been in a coma for about a week and had been unresponsive couldn't talk couldn't didn't eat couldn't do anything and everybody was expecting him to pass any moment and all of the family had been called in from different places around the country and they were around his bed having prayer time together and all this time he had been completely comatose and to the amazement of all of those standing there he opened his eyes and sat up and looked up and all he said was turned to his wife called her by name and said

I love you he looked up and said amazing simply amazing laid back and left just like that can't help but wonder what did he see that was amazing he saw something that nobody else there saw and was able to describe it with just those words amazing simply amazing laid back and he was gone and I've heard him get that incident on at least two different occasions and I'm sure it made a very profound impact on everyone who was there but this is part and parcel of what God sometimes is pleased to reveal and it is part of dying grace there is a special ability that God gives to those who are about to exit and the you know the old songwriter talked about this world is not my home I'm just a passing through treasures laid for me somewhere beyond the blue angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I can't feel at home in this world anymore and I think that that is a pretty common feeling for believers who are ready to go to be with the Lord this world has less and less appeal and interest to them and their real interest is transferred to the other side and they do not dread the exit they anticipate it and look forward to it John yeah yeah I appreciate that in Acts chapter seven just after just after Stephen was ready well he's ready to breed his last and they stoned him to death and he looked up and saw and I'm sure nobody else saw it nobody else who was throwing the stones they didn't look up and say yeah we see what

[32 : 23] Stephen's talking about no they didn't see anything but Stephen looked up and saw Jesus and some commentators have made a point the fact that that he was standing at the right hand of God and the text tells us here in Hebrews chapter 12 that Jesus and in verse verse 2 that Jesus sat down on the right hand of the throne of God and Stephen said he wasn't sitting he was standing and draw your own conclusion but one wonders if Jesus rose to his feet to welcome the first martyr into heaven and then Stephen cried out in a similar fashion to his Lord from the cross Lord lay not this sin that is the sin of their stoning and who was it that was stoning

Stephen it was the Sanhedrin that was the equivalent fellas that was the equivalent of Congress these men physical leaders shakers and movers in Israel they were the ones who were throwing stones and he said lay not this sin to their charts in other words don't hold them accountable for my death which was tantamount to what Jesus said and father forgive them they know not what they do

and they say stone Stephen they did so out of ignorance and later the apostle Paul who admits having held the garments of those who stoned him said I did it I did it in ignorance and unbelief wow what a passage sat down at the right hand of the throne of God