**The Sin Which So Easily Ensnares Us**

*Hebrews 12:1-2*

**Introduction**

1. The life of faith is often referred to in scripture as a race – **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** (compete for imperishable crown, discipline body); **2 Timothy 4:7** (finished race – kept faith).
2. Many, like Paul, have finished their race, and stand to cheer us on in ours – **(v. 1)**
   1. Cloud of witnesses – from **chapter 11**.
   2. Witnesses – in the sense of the testimony their life bears of God’s faithfulness to those who are faithful, and what faithfulness is – **Hebrews 11:6** (rewards diligent seekers)
      1. **(v. 2)** – obtained good testimony.
      2. **(v. 4)** – obtained witness he was righteous – “being dead still speaks”
      3. GOD REWARDS FAITHFULNESS – TAKE US FOR EXAMPLE.
   3. They cheer us on figuratively, as their lives stand as an object lesson of faithfulness to God, and its result.
   4. **(v. 2)** – Jesus is our ultimate example of living by faith to achieve the goal.
3. All these people of faith had to endure, and in order to endure they had to eliminate:
   1. Weight – distinct from sin – **1 Corinthians 6:12** – lawful, but not helpful.
   2. Sin – that which will impede our progress, and disqualify us (**cf. 2 Timothy 2:5**).
4. ***“the sin which so easily ensnares us”*** – any sin, but seems to narrow the thought (“the” – definite article).
   1. Not specified in context.
   2. COULD BE ANYTHING FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL – covetousness, lust, jealousy, hate, selfish-ambition, etc.
   3. WHAT IS YOUR SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENSNARES YOU?
5. Yet, while there may be something specific which we know we struggle with, and which the Hebrews knew they struggled with, perhaps there is something which “SO EASILY ENSNARES” all of us which is more fundamental – what lies beneath each sin.
6. The Text in Context
7. Language
   1. Ho (“the”) euperistatos (“which so easily ensnares”) hamartia (“sin”)
      1. “the closely besetting sin” (YLT)
      2. The easily ensnaring sin…
   2. Euperistatos – 1x in NT – eu, “well,” peri, “around,” statos, “standing,” i.e., easily encompassing (VINE)
      1. well standing around, i.e. (a competitor) thwarting (a racer) in every direction (STRONG)
         1. skillfully surrounding i.e. besetting (ibid. comments)
      2. of a sin which readily or easily encircles and entangles the Christian runner, like a long, loose robe clinging to his limbs. *Beset* is a good rendering, meaning *to* *surround*. (Vincent’s Word Studies)
      3. “Whatever it may be, the word gives us to understand that it is what meets us at every turn; that it is always presenting itself to us.” (Adam Clarke)
   3. Describing a sin which surrounds them, and thus easily entangles them at every turn.
   4. What sin surrounded the readers?
      1. “The sin may be any evil propensity. The sin of unbelief naturally suggests itself here.” (Vincent’s Word Studies)
      2. “It is not primarily "the sin," etc., but sin in general, with, however, special reference to "apostasy," against which he had already warned them, as one to which they might gradually be seduced; the besetting sin of the Hebrews, UNBELIEF.” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown)
      3. “This may mean…the damning sin of unbelief” (Matthew Henry)
8. Warning and Exhortation of the Writer
   1. Warning of apostasy – **Hebrews 2:1; 3:12; 4:11; 6:4-6; 10:35-39; 12:14-17, 25**
      1. Judaizing false teaching – **Hebrews 13:8-9**
      2. Persecution – **Hebrews 10:32-33**
      3. Jews pressured to turn back to the obsolete system they left, and therefore away from Christ.
   2. Exhortation to faith – **Hebrews 3:12, 18-19; 10:35-39** (endurance of faith); **11** (examples of faith); **12:2** (look to Jesus, the author and finisher of faith – chief leader, and consummator – “He is the ground of faith and the one who carries it to perfection”)
   3. Because of false teaching and persecution, the faith of the readers was wavering:
      1. In scripture, not merely belief, but also a connotation of trust.
      2. **Faith – *pistis* – (1) that which evokes trust and faith (2) state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, trust, confidence, faith. (BDAG)**
9. The sin of unbelief surrounds us on all sides and must be put away if we are to complete our race.
   1. Not necessarily a mere doubting of facts.
   2. **Rather, a failure in trust – we are convicted of the gospel truth, and fully believe in the contents, but exhibit a lacking trust when we choose things of the world over things of God.**
10. Lay Aside the Sin of Unbelief
11. Do you trust the steadfastness of God’s word? (2:1-4)
    1. **Hebrews 2:1-4** – warning of apostasy (drifting away) from the word of salvation.
       1. Therefore – points back to chapter 1.
          1. Jesus is greater than the prophets **(1:1-2),** and the angels **(1:4).**
          2. **Prophets** – mouthpieces of God.
          3. **Angels** – *aggelos* – a messenger.
             1. **(2:2)** – word (Old Law) communicated through angels. (**cf. Galatians 3:19**)
             2. **(2:2)** – word proved steadfast, i.e. disobedience was punished accordingly.
       2. Pay careful attention to word spoken by Son of God:
          1. **(2:3-4)** – steadfastness of word of Christ (New Law).
             1. Spoken by Son of God – ***“Hear Him!”*** (**Matthew 17:5) (NOTE: Elijah – prophets; Moses – Law)**
             2. Confirmed by those who heard – **1 John 1:3**
             3. God bearing witness by miracles – **Mark 16:17-18**
          2. **(2:3a)** – how shall we escape if we neglect it?
             1. **10:28-29** – how much worse punishment?
    2. When God spoke before, and it was not heeded:
       1. Nadab and Abihu – **Leviticus 10:1-3** – fire not commanded.
       2. Moses – **Numbers 20:7-12** – struck when told to speak.
       3. Uzzah – **2 Samuel 6:6-7** – touched the ark when God said not to.
    3. Do we trust that God’s word is steadfast (immovable, and upon trying, being subject to penalty)?
       1. Jesus – **John 10:35** – cannot be broken.
       2. Sowing – **Galatians 6:7-8** – cannot sow to flesh and reap everlasting life.
       3. **Colossians 3:17** – do all in the name of the Lord.
          1. **Doing something while knowing you are without the authority of Christ demonstrates (at the time at least) A LACK OF TRUST THAT CHRIST SAYS WHAT HE MEANS AND MEANS WHAT HE SAYS.**
12. Do you trust God’s evaluation of sin? (3:12-14; 12:16-17)
    1. When we sin, we show that in the moment we value that pleasure over fellowship with God, and all things eternal.
    2. WE SHOW WE DON’T TRUST WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT THE DANGER AND WORTHLESSNESS OF SIN.
    3. **Hebrews 3:12-14** – unbelief is the exhibition of one who chooses sin instead of fellowship with Christ – but such sin is deceitful.
       1. ***“deceitfulness of sin”*** – sin exaggerates the pleasure it offers, and boasts of fulfillment that it cannot offer.
          1. God is telling us that SIN IS A FRAUD.
          2. IT IS NOT WORTH IT.
       2. ***“evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God”*** – the one who does not trust what God says about sin – GOD PAINTS THE TRUE PICTURE SIN REFUSES TO GIVE US.
       3. ***“hardened”*** – the one who, in lacking trust of God, gives themselves to the deceitful pleasure of sin is in danger of becoming desensitized to the revelation of God about sin and other matters.
          1. Sin always takes you further than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, and costs you more than you want to pay.
    4. Example of the deceitfulness of sin, and the lasting damage it can cause the profane person who buys into it – **Hebrews 12:15-17** – profane Esau.
       1. ***“And Esau said, ‘Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?’” (Genesis 25:32).***
       2. He was deceived into thinking his situation was worse than it was, and that a stew of lentils was of greater importance than His birthright.
    5. **1 John 2:15-17** – what is lasting is doing the will of God.
13. Do you trust the ability and aid of our High Priest? (4:14-16; 7:23-25)
    1. Sometimes when we succumb to temptation, we make the excuse that we cannot help it – it is who we are, and it is too much to expect that we overcome the urge.
       1. This thought shows a lacking trust, in part, of the ability and aid of Jesus as Hight Priest.
    2. **Hebrews 4:14-16** – since we have such a one as Jesus as our Hight Priest, we need to take advantage of what He offers and overcome.
       1. **Context** – after warning about following the example of the disobedient Israelites.
          1. I.e. you are expected to, and can overcome the temptation to disobey God.
       2. **(v. 14)** – unlike Aaron, and the successive high priests, Jesus went into heaven itself. **(cf. Hebrews 9:24)**
          1. He serves as High Priest truly before God’s throne.
          2. Hold fast confession of faith in Him. Why would we?
       3. **(v. 15)** – He is in heaven serving our behalf and is the only one who can truly sympathize with us.
          1. **Job 9:33** – Job lamented a lacking mediator.
          2. **1 Timothy 2:5-6** – one mediator, THE MAN Jesus…
          3. Not only did He experience the same, but He knows how to overcome 🡪
       4. **(v. 16)** – We need to therefore come to Him for:
          1. **Mercy** – when we fail – **2:17** – His blood offered as High Priest still makes propitiation for our sins.
          2. **Grace** – to help in time of need – i.e. He can help us overcome these matters.
             1. **1 Corinthians 10:13** – way of escape. (Do we trust there is a way out provided?)
             2. **2 Corinthians 12:9** – do we trust His grace is sufficient?
    3. **Hebrews 7:23-25** – He is always available to help, and will never not be as He lives forever.
       1. Uttermost – *pantelēs* – (1) pert. to meeting a very high standard of quality or completeness (2) pert. to unlimited duration of time, forever, for all time. (BDAG)
       2. Both employed **– 7:11** (perfection not through Levitical, but through Christ); **7:23** (death prevented continuation, Jesus continues forever).
       3. **JESUS IS ALWAYS THERE FOR US, AND HAS EVERTHING WE NEED TO OVERCOME – DO WE TRUST THIS, OR NEGLECT THE HELP?**
14. Do you trust God’s promise of judgement? (4:11-13; 9:27; 10:30-31)
    1. **Hebrews 9:27** – we die, and then are judged. (Ultimately a sentencing – death seals our fate, and what we did while alive determines already where we’ll spend eternity)
       1. We know this, however, it seems at times we don’t trust it.
       2. If we did trust it, we wouldn’t make the decisions we make at times.
    2. **Hebrews 4:11-13** – the word will expose everything in the end as we stand before God.
       1. **(v. 11)** – do we think we serve a different God than they?
          1. Why would He use their example of warning if it were true that God would be more lenient toward us?
          2. **(v. 2**) – gospel was preached to them.
       2. **(v. 12)** – do we think we’ll be able to explain why we did what we did to the exemption from punishment?
          1. The word will expose our true thoughts and motives.
          2. IT IS STEADFAST (**cf. 2:1-4**)
       3. **(v. 13)** – nothing will be hidden from God.
    3. **Hebrews 10:30-31** – we were added to the family of God, but that does not mean we will avoid the same judgment.
       1. **(vv. 26-27)** – what it means when we go on sinning knowing the price that was paid for us.
       2. He will judge HIS PEOPLE.
    4. **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** – God will bring every work into judgment.
    5. “Someday you’ll stand at the bar on high, someday your record you’ll see; someday you’ll answer the question of life, what will your answer be? Where will you spend your eternity?” (What Will Your Answer Be?, Tillit S. Tedlie)

**Conclusion**

1. At every turn in our life our faith/trust in God is going to be tested.
2. All the decisions we make manifest whether we trust in God.
3. ***“Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6).***
4. Let us lay aside the sin of unbelief which so easily besets us and run the race with endurance.